



TEXTS ADOPTED

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Access to finance for SMEs and scale-ups

European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2025 on access to finance for SMEs and scale-ups (2025/2072(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 29 January 2025 entitled 'A Competitiveness Compass for the EU' (COM(2025)0030),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 28 May 2025 entitled 'The EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy - Choose Europe to start and scale' (COM(2025)0270),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 21 May 2025 entitled 'The Single Market: our European home market in an uncertain world - A Strategy for making the Single Market simple, seamless and strong' (COM(2025)0500),
- having regard to the Budapest Declaration adopted on 8 November 2024 at the informal meeting of heads of state or government,
- having regard to the publication of 18 July 2024 by Commission President von der Leyen entitled 'Europe's choice: political guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029',
- having regard to the European Central Bank report entitled 'Survey on the Access to Finance of Enterprises in the euro area - First Quarter of 2025', published in April 2025,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 19 March 2025 entitled 'Savings and Investments Union - A Strategy to Foster Citizens' Wealth and Economic Competitiveness in the EU' (COM(2025)0124),
- having regard to the Commission report entitled 'Survey on the access to finance of enterprises (SAFE) - Analytical report 2024', published in January 2025,

- having regard to the report by Mario Draghi entitled ‘The future of European competitiveness’ (Draghi report), published in September 2024,
 - having regard to the Commission report of 25 July 2024 entitled ‘Annual Report on European SMEs 2023/2024’,
 - having regard to the report by Enrico Letta entitled ‘Much more than a market’ (Letta report), published in April 2024,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Special European Council meeting of 17 and 18 April 2024,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 December 2023 on increasing innovation, industrial and technological competitiveness through a favourable environment for start-ups and scale-ups¹,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 12 September 2023 entitled ‘SME Relief Package’ (COM(2023)0535),
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (A10-0185/2025),
- A. whereas micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) represent the backbone of European business, with SMEs accounting for 99,8 % of all enterprises, 65,2 % of employment and 53,1 % of the value added in the non-financial business sector in the EU in 2023²;
- B. whereas the EU as a whole – and especially its largest economies – is currently experiencing slow economic growth and problems as companies are losing competitiveness to third countries, aggravated by the consequences of the pandemic, the energy crisis and Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, which have particularly affected SMEs and the economies of countries along the EU’s eastern border;
- C. whereas European SMEs vary in scope, industry, financial needs, location, ownership, business model, and innovation capacity, and hence face diverse challenges and financing needs, with limited capacity to face them; whereas most European SMEs operate mainly

¹ OJ C, C/2024/4182, 2.8.2024, ELI:

<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4182/oj>.

² Katsinis, A., Lagüera-González, J., Di Bella, L., Odenthal, L., Hell, M., et al., ‘Annual Report on European SMEs 2023/2024’, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2bef0eda-2f75-497d-982e-c0d1cea57c0e_en?filename=Annual%20Report%20on%20European%20SMEs%202024.pdf.

at national level; whereas relatively few SMEs are involved in cross-border operations within the EU, while those that export outside the Union constitute a minority;

- D. whereas the Draghi report indicates that regulatory obstacles and administrative burdens are among the greatest challenges faced by SMEs, with reporting regulations, mostly under the European Green Deal, being seen by more than 60 % of EU companies as an obstacle to investment, and 55 % of SMEs flagging regulatory obstacles and administrative burden as their greatest challenge, while the proportion is even greater for start-ups and micro-enterprises, and recommends that SMEs be exempted from regulations on proportionality grounds, with a more simple, predictable and competitive regulatory framework and a review of the European Green Deal being key for their prosperity;
- E. whereas the Commission aims to improve access to finance for SMEs in order to increase scale, reduce inefficiencies and promote interoperability, and has set a target of at least a 35 % reduction in the reporting burdens for SMEs, and announced a new SME competitiveness check in impact assessments; whereas these initiatives must be accompanied by a well-developed venture capital ecosystem, keeping in mind that institutional investors such as insurance companies make an important contribution to SME financing through the passing and transformation of risks, and also keeping in mind the fact that, unlike in the United States, most of the financing in the European Union comes from banks, and there are noticeable disparities between the European investment culture and other regions of the world, notably for venture capital and angel investment; whereas this situation makes SMEs particularly vulnerable to a tightening of bank lending;
- F. whereas Europe lacks a more dynamic and favourable environment for innovative companies to scale-up and for further investment and advancements in digital infrastructure, which leads to close to 30 % of 'unicorns' relocating abroad³;
- G. whereas the Commission has published a strategy for start-ups and scale-ups, and there are various initiatives in place aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, innovation and digital transformation in the EU, such as the start-up and scale-up strategy, the eco-innovation scoreboard, Knowledge and Innovation Communities, the European Cluster Collaboration Platform, the Digital Decade and the

³ Draghi, Mario, 'The Future of European Competitiveness - A Competitiveness Strategy for Europe', 2024, https://commission.europa.eu/document/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en.

digital single market strategy, as well as funding programmes dedicated to innovation in other policy areas;

General considerations

1. Considers that creating favourable market conditions for European companies to innovate, start up, create, grow and scale up in Europe is essential to unlock our market's full potential and help our economies become more competitive; acknowledges that regulatory fragmentation is one of the obstacles preventing scale-ups from reaching the full potential of the single market; recognises that SMEs face unequal financing conditions and requirements across Member States and regions, due to factors specific to each business, geographical location – such as being located in remote, outermost, and island areas – and the economic environment, and they therefore need solutions tailored to such particularities, as well as to the needs of the smaller economies;
2. Welcomes the fact that, following the Draghi and Letta reports, the need for a more competitive, less fragmented and less bureaucratic single market has been recognised; calls on the Commission to take into consideration the recommendations in these reports, which state that immediate and decisive action at both regulatory and political level is required; regrets, in this regard, the excessive burdens SMEs have experienced as a consequence of the implementation of various obligations under the European Green Deal; is convinced that dedicated definitions of start-ups and scale-ups would increase the opportunities for support through measures that are tailored to their specific needs;
3. Acknowledges that bank lending remains the primary external financing source for SMEs in the Union; underlines the vital role of traditional banking models, including small regional banks, savings banks, cooperative banks and public institutions;
4. Stresses that the EU should strive to make the business environment easier and more attractive for the mobilisation of both European and international capital and investment; stresses the need to foster a scale-up ecosystem that relies primarily on private investments and public-private partnerships, which would help to mobilise capital and facilitate access to finance for businesses; underlines the important and well-developed role of banks with specific regional and local knowledge in providing funding to SMEs, which stems from long-term relationships with these companies;
5. Draws attention to the particular challenges faced by European scale-ups in obtaining late-stage growth financing; notes that many high-potential EU firms remain dependent on foreign venture capital and investors, with a large share of later funding rounds led by non-European investors; highlights the need to create more attractive

conditions for investment within the Union; stresses that access to finance should be guided by criteria of economic efficiency, profitability and scalability, regardless of the origin of the capital, and recalls that open and global competition to attract investment benefits businesses and innovation; highlights, in this regard, the recent adoption of the EU Listing Act⁴ that makes it simpler for companies of all sizes, including SMEs, to be listed on European stock exchanges;

6. Takes note of the publication by the Commission of the European start-up and scale-up strategy, which should promote innovation and address the challenges faced by individual innovators, founders, start-ups and scale-ups in the EU; stresses that, although the diagnosis contained in the strategy is to some extent accurate, the proposed measures must be more ambitious, with emphasis being placed on repealing all EU regulations that impose unnecessary bureaucratic burdens that hinder the creation and expansion of businesses; asks the Commission to include agriculture among the priority sectors identified in the strategy;
7. Considers that facilitating access to finance for SMEs and scale-ups will depend on (i) a significant and continued reduction in bureaucratic and regulatory burdens, including lengthy permitting procedures, costly reporting requirements, and the complexity and unpredictability of the regulatory environment, (ii) an enhanced capacity to unlock private investment and savings, (iii) bridging the funding gap for scale-ups, and (iv) reinforcing a competitive capital markets ecosystem within the EU; stresses that, for these purposes, the final goal of the Commission must be the completion of a savings and investments union that respects the competences of the Member States and the principle of subsidiarity;

⁴ The Listing Act is composed of Regulation (EU) 2024/2809 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 amending Regulations (EU) 2017/1129, (EU) No 596/2014 and (EU) No 600/2014 to make public capital markets in the Union more attractive for companies and to facilitate access to capital for small and medium-sized enterprises (OJ L, 2024/2809, 14.11.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2809/oj>), Directive (EU) 2024/2810 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on multiple-vote share structures in companies that seek admission to trading of their shares on a multilateral trading facility (OJ L, 2024/2810, 14.11.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/2810/oj>) and Directive (EU) 2024/2811 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 amending Directive 2014/65/EU to make public capital markets in the Union more attractive for companies and to facilitate access to capital for small and medium-sized enterprises and repealing Directive 2001/34/EC (OJ L, 2024/2811, 14.11.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/2811/oj>).

Reducing bureaucratic and regulatory burdens

8. Recalls that many promising European start-ups and scale-ups are relocating to non-EU countries because of a burdensome, slow, fragmented and unpredictable European regulatory landscape; underlines that, unless this trend is reversed through substantial simplification, Europe will continue to lose companies at their most strategic growth stage, leading to less job creation and slower economic growth; deplores the fact that tax and regulatory thresholds discourage business growth by imposing more burdensome treatment once certain levels of size or turnover are exceeded;
9. Calls for further simplification efforts and encourages the Commission to put forward subsequent proposals that go beyond the its omnibus simplification packages and that establish start-up-friendly regulations and frameworks that facilitate the growth, scalability and cross-border operations of start-ups and scale-ups, while ensuring consumer protection, data privacy and fair competition; recalls the Commission's commitment to reducing bureaucracy through a horizontal approach, across all areas, and calls for the systematic screening of the *EU acquis* in order to identify and eliminate regulatory obstacles to SMEs;
10. Emphasises, following the adoption by the Commission of the Second Omnibus Package, the need for streamlined processes in the implementation of the InvestEU programme to ensure that SMEs – including the smallest ones – can more easily access the financial support they need to grow and innovate; emphasises the importance of ensuring that regulatory frameworks and EU-funded instruments are proportionate to the size and administrative capacity of SMEs, and are appropriately adapted to SMEs, rather than being replicated from requirements for larger companies;
11. Notes that imposing multiple regulatory requirements on banks can negatively impact SME lending; stresses the importance of avoiding duplicate reporting requirements and multiple reporting channels, which impose unnecessary administrative burdens, particularly on smaller banks; calls on the Commission, with assistance from the European Banking Authority and the Single Supervisory Mechanism, to assess the effects of current regulatory rules on SME lending; underscores the necessity of applying the proportionality principle in banking regulation;
12. Urges the Commission to assess existing regulatory obligations that are burdening companies, such as the sustainable finance framework, which is a poor fit for European SMEs, and other obligations stemming from the European Green Deal, and to develop proportionality thresholds to exempt SMEs from excessive obligations; welcomes the proposed new SME competitiveness

check; calls on the Commission to ensure that any sustainability reporting standards are simple and voluntary, and to review Pillar 3 banking disclosure requirements that may indirectly impose disproportionate data demands on SME clients;

13. Stresses that the 'one-in, one-out' approach, which in practice is not sufficiently implemented, is not enough, and calls on the Commission to propose a more ambitious simplification strategy that provides for legal certainty and predictability and that also reviews level 2 and 3 legislation; highlights that the Commission's 35 % reporting obligations reduction target must be measurable and results have to be trackable, with a clear timeline, key performance indicators and a tracking methodology that is fit for purpose;

Unlocking private capital and savings

14. Notes that the Commission aims to implement a savings and investments union, which must include not only action at EU level, but also the development of tools, solutions and best practices that respect and support Member States' actions at national level and promote cross-border coherence and the gradual reduction of critical divergences;
15. Calls on the Commission to improve investors' access to information and protection, while leveraging the potential of simplified retail products to help channel household savings to the capital markets, and recalls the important role that pension funds and insurance companies play as facilitators of that channelling; takes note of the launch of the Finance Europe label, which should enable savers who wish to invest their savings in European companies and thus directly contribute to financing the economy of the Union; stresses that this label should not introduce any further administrative burden for companies;
16. Regrets the fact that the European Venture Capital Funds (EuVECA) Regulation⁵ has had little positive impact on local venture capital markets; welcomes the focus on venture capital for young, innovative SMEs in the Commission communication on the savings and investments union, but regrets the fact that the Commission's proposal on EuVECA has been delayed until Q3 2026; calls on the Commission to consider removing the EUR 100 000 minimum investment threshold to allow private savers to invest in alternative funds; urges the Commission to encourage the Member States to provide attractive and stable tax and regulatory frameworks for venture capital funds investing in SMEs;

⁵ Regulation (EU) No 345/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2013 on European venture capital funds (OJ L 115, 25.4.2013, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/345/oj>).

17. Strongly emphasises the need to improve the financial literacy of EU citizens and entrepreneurs and promote better saving and investment conditions that enable a shift from saving to investing in an informed and independent manner; calls on the Commission to include entrepreneurship in the scope of the incoming financial literacy strategy and in a toolkit for Member States to enhance coordination in this regard;
18. Calls for public funding not to be used as subsidies, but rather as a catalyst to mobilise private investments and make more private funding available to MSMEs; recalls that most of this investment must be private and underlines that this must be stimulated by attractive and stable tax and regulatory frameworks that are appealing to both professional and retail investors; recalls the current structural bias towards loans and considers it necessary to open a debate on the need for equity tax incentives, as well as to encourage venture capital as part of the business model of traditional banking without compromising financial stability;
19. Highlights that the public sector can play a key role in mobilising private capital, especially in information-asymmetric sectors or regions with underdeveloped financial markets; calls for public instruments to be designed efficiently, with competitive neutrality and a focus on impact, maximising their crowding-in effect on private investment; stresses, to this end, that the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group's potential must be fully leveraged to crowd in private investment, and it must dedicate more resources to SMEs' innovation projects, start-ups and scale-ups; highlights, furthermore, the role of the Regional Development Fund, especially in regions with limited credit availability and given the fact that the cost of loans varies across the EU, which disadvantages SMEs in some Member States;
20. Takes note of the publication of the review of the securitisation framework and calls on the Commission to make it more flexible so as to allow credit institutions to provide further funding to companies, including SMEs, and support their growth without transparency and credit quality being eroded; stresses, to this end, that the robustness of the significant risk transfer framework must be enhanced by introducing greater risk sensitivity and improving supervisory oversight, thus contributing to simplification;
21. Acknowledges the Commission's aim to develop a blueprint for an EU investment savings account, which should include (i) a simplified tax declaration procedure, (ii) accompanying tax incentives, and (iii) the absence of restrictions on investment geography, sector, deposit limits, or minimum holding periods;
22. Recognises the central role played by the private sector in the economic growth and prosperity of the EU; stresses that any

progress towards the integration of capital markets must be built on the principles of economic freedom, competition and legal certainty;

23. Highlights that a European marketplace for direct secondary transactions, which would allow the trading of shares of late-stage and pre-IPO (initial public offering) start-ups, would enhance the Union's financing ecosystem as long as it ensures a level playing field among Member States, prevents the concentration of financial activity in only a few jurisdictions, and fully respects national competences;
24. Notes that the recast of the Market in Financial Instruments Directive⁶ (MiFID II) provides for a dedicated category of SME growth markets that are supposed to cater for the specific needs of smaller companies; calls on the Commission to further develop this instrument by providing a more flexible regulatory regime that fits the needs of small and mid-cap companies;

Bridging the funding gap for scale-ups

25. Regrets that, as a consequence of the lack of attractive financing options for scale-ups in our market and of a competitive regulatory environment, many European businesses end up using venture capitalists based in non-EU countries and settling in non-EU country markets to scale up their businesses; expresses concern over the growing number of SME failures in the EU⁷; considers it a priority to address the underlying causes, such as the lack of long-term capital, tax pressure during scaling and disproportionate administrative burdens;
26. Understands that mobilising European institutional investors, notably insurance companies, banks and pension funds, is key to reducing the scale-up gap; notes that an increase in the share of venture capital funds in Europe is needed to provide more funding to scale-ups, for which a more favourable framework for venture capital financing and safe foreign direct investments in the EU is needed; calls on the Commission to encourage Member States with underdeveloped pension systems to develop supplementary (Pillar 2) pension sectors, which could help build venture capital markets, and

⁶ Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on markets in financial instruments and amending Directive 2002/92/EC and Directive 2011/61/EU (OJ L 173, 12.6.2014, p. 349, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/65/oj>).

⁷ Katsinis, A., Lagüera-González, J., Di Bella, L., Odenthal, L., Hell, M., et al., 'Annual Report on European SMEs 2023/2024', Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2bef0eda-2f75-497d-982e-c0d1cea57c0e_en?filename=Annual%20Report%20on%20European%20SMEs%202024.pdf.

to create a regulatory environment that promotes equity investments by institutional investors; recalls the Commission's commitment to working on risk-absorbing measures to crowd in private funding from commercial banks, investors and venture capital;

27. Encourages the Commission to strengthen co-investment platforms, including regionally anchored vehicles and business-angel networks, to crowd in private capital and close persistent early-stage financing gaps for high-growth, innovation-driven SMEs; calls for the forthcoming European Tech-Champions Initiative 2.0 to be adequately capitalised and for dedicated EU funding schemes that support the fundraising and listing of start-ups and scale-up tech companies; underlines the EIB Group's mandate to back SMEs, urging it to adopt a more flexible risk-assessment framework and to ensure that the new TechEU Platform is widely accessible across all Member States through streamlined procedures; agrees with the savings and investments union communication on the importance of EU-level public finance and therefore advocates a reorientation of EU funds towards fewer, more flexible programmes that can shift resources between priorities over time;
28. Highlights the importance of creating the right conditions for citizens' savings to be channelled into productive investment instruments that can benefit SMEs and scale-ups; encourages the Commission to eliminate regulatory disincentives for retail investment products, and to ensure that retail investors are adequately protected when taking investment decisions; recognises that crowdfunding and technologies such as smart contracts and decentralised finance can broaden SMEs' access to direct finance, and urges the Commission to review its regulatory framework with an innovation-focused, proportionate risk approach;
29. Emphasises that a more integrated innovation ecosystem, with networks of universities, start-ups, large enterprises and venture capitalists, underpinned by access to testing facilities and technology infrastructure, is instrumental in helping businesses scale up; highlights the positive role that entrepreneur forums, private accelerators and mentoring networks can play in supporting the growth of start-ups, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to build on initiatives such as the Trusted Investors Network, which aims to mobilise private capital in support of Europe's innovation ambitions;

Reinforcement of a competitive ecosystem in the EU

30. Considers that a competitive ecosystem in the EU must be composed of both strong national markets and a strong internal market, and that healthy competition between Member States, especially in terms of economic and regulatory approaches, incentivises them to keep their economies dynamic and attractive, but recalls that Member

States are not to create barriers to the efficient cross-border allocation of capital or set priorities solely on the basis of the geographical origin of funding; calls for the Commission's initiatives to respect and build on best practices that have already been successful in the Member States;

31. Urges the Commission to focus on enabling conditions for markets, relevant common denominators for the Member States, and voluntary and complementary frameworks aimed at gradually reducing market fragmentation;
32. Calls on the Commission to clarify what the 28th legal regime would consist of and recalls that, if it were to be introduced, it would have to be voluntary, fully respect Member States' regimes, and be developed in close cooperation with the private sector in order to offer a simplified framework that attracts private investors to European start-ups, scale-ups and SMEs and helps European start-ups become global tech champions;
33. Calls on the Commission, with the support of Member State authorities, to develop simplified guidance tools and one-stop-shops for SMEs and scale-ups in order to help them navigate different legal systems across the EU on matters such as corporate law, labour law, insolvency law, tax law, intellectual property rights and national funding possibilities; calls on the Commission, furthermore, to improve SME access-to-finance monitoring tools, including the development of EU-wide indicators and dashboards that can help them identify opportunities across Member States without creating new reporting obligations or increasing administrative burdens;
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34. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.