

What support is available for European SMEs?

In the EU, an estimated 23 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for approximately 70% of EU jobs and GDP, and their flexibility is seen as a major motor of future innovation and job creation. The innovation and growth potential of European SMEs is pivotal for the prosperity of the EU as a whole. However, in the global marketplace, it is becoming increasingly difficult for SMEs to develop and maintain a competitive advantage. Great business ideas need access to an array of business tools and support to remain one step ahead of the competition.

The Small Business Act, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and the Europe 2020 strategy have reaffirmed the European Commission's commitment to providing support for SMEs' growth so as to ensure their continued contribution to Europe's economic competitiveness.

In order to provide the necessary support mechanisms, the European Commission has developed an extensive network of in-depth programs and resources to help European SMEs thrive in today's economy. No matter the stage of development of your SME, assistance for the following key topics can be found below.

Support Reference Guide for EU SMEs:

One-Stop-Shop Services

[The Enterprise Europe Network](#)

is the largest network of contact points providing information and advice to EU companies on EU matters, in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Launched in 2008 by the European Commission, it is an integrated network offering a "one-stop shop" to meet all the information needs of SMEs and companies in Europe.

[European Portal for SMEs](#) provides a single entry point to information on all European Union policies, programmes, projects, tools and services aimed at SMEs. The aim is to provide easy access to information on all European Union policies and initiatives of relevance to SMEs.

Funding

[EU finance for SMEs](#)

Assists SMEs identify and apply for loans supported by the European Union. Provides guidance on identifying EU supported loans for SMEs through the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme 2007-2013 (CIP). CIP funds are used to guarantee loans to SMEs provided by a range of financial institutions involved in SME lending.

[A Quick Guide to Funding for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises](#) Depending on their needs, small and medium-sized enterprises may be eligible for EU indirect funding via financial intermediaries in their home country or for direct grant funding from the European Commission.

[EU Finance Days for SMEs](#)

The European Commission is organising an EU Finance Day for SMEs in each Member State capital to inform participants about the EU financial instruments for SMEs, and the local financial intermediaries through which SMEs can access these instruments.

Competitiveness

[Gate2Growth](#)

The Pan-European Gateway to Business & Innovation Financing. The portal aims to support innovative entrepreneurs in Europe as well as to assist Innovation Professionals to improve their capacity to assist entrepreneurs by fostering networking and the exchange of experience and good practice at European level.

[Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme \(CIP\)](#)

The Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme aims to encourage the competitiveness of European SMEs. The CIP consists of three operational programmes:

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program, Information Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme and Intelligent Energy Europe.

[Analysis of Competitiveness](#)

The Observatory of European SMEs began in December 1992 in order to improve the monitoring of the economic performance of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Europe. Its task is to provide information on SMEs to policy-makers, researchers, economists and SMEs themselves.

[Enterprise and Industry Online Magazine](#)

The Magazine of Enterprise policy aims to disseminate information on all EU policies, actions and initiatives promoting growth and development, with a view to strengthening the competitiveness of EU enterprises.

Developing a Network

[Enterprise Europe Network \(EEN\)](#)

The Enterprise Europe Network helps small business to make the most of the European marketplace. Working through local business organisations, they help SMEs to develop business in [new markets](#) , source or license [new technologies](#) , and access [EU finance](#) and [EU funding](#)

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[580 member organisations](#)

across the EU and beyond, including chambers of commerce and industry, technology centres, universities and development agencies.

Asset Protection

[InnovAccess](#)

The consortium consists of a network of the national patent offices of the European Union, the European Patent Office and the Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market. The main objective with this network is to provide general information on domestic, foreign and international intellectual property rights to SMEs and academia in Europe.

[IPR Helpdesk](#)

The IPR Helpdesk provides comprehensive information on intellectual property (IP) rights, focusing on IP questions in the context of projects co-financed under the EU Framework Programmes on research, technological development and demonstration activities (RTD).

[EUR-Lex](#)

provides direct free access to European Union law through access to the Official Journal of the European Union as well as the treaties, legislation, case-law and legislative proposals.

[Respecting the Rules: Trade Policy Instrument](#)

A 'how to' guide to ensure fair and undistorted trade between EU companies and non-EU companies. Targeted at SMEs, the site covers specific legal instruments, notably the 'Trade Defence Instruments' (TDI), and includes a helpdesk for SMEs and FAQs.

[Taxation and Customs Union](#)

This site gives enterprises a clear view of all the measures to be taken into account when importing or exporting goods. It includes an online customs tariff database which covers all measures relating to tariff, commercial and agricultural legislation of relevance when importing or exporting goods.