

InvestEU: UniCredit and EIF unlock up to €890 million in new financing to accelerate growth of SMEs across CEE

- **UniCredit and the European Investment Fund (EIF) sign one of the largest InvestEU guarantee transactions, more than doubling their existing partnership in Central and Eastern Europe**
- **€445 million of new InvestEU guarantees will unlock up to €890 million of SME financing in seven Central and Eastern European countries by the end of 2027**
- **The agreement expands support for SMEs investing in sustainability, innovation and digitalisation and opens new opportunities in the debt capital market**

Vienna, 14.01.2026 – UniCredit and the European Investment Fund (EIF), part of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group, have signed a new InvestEU guarantee agreement to significantly increase support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

The agreement was announced at the FT CEE Forum in Vienna, a highly influential event in the region, which brought together more than 2,000 delegates from 54 countries, including political leaders, investors, policymakers and business executives shaping the future of Central and Eastern Europe.

The new €445 million guarantee increases and extends the unlimited InvestEU guarantee ceiling launched in 2023, making it one of the EIF's largest InvestEU transactions. Available until the end of 2027, the fund is expected to unlock up to €890 million in additional financing for SMEs in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia.

The expanded fund will primarily focus on sustainability- and innovation-driven projects and will continue to offer improved financing conditions for SMEs, including more competitive pricing, longer maturities and reduced collateral requirements.

“This transaction demonstrates how InvestEU can be deployed at scale to achieve tangible impact on SMEs in Europe. By significantly expanding our partnership with UniCredit, we are supporting thousands of businesses in Central and Eastern Europe as they invest in sustainability, innovation and digital transformation. The strong take-up of the previous guarantee confirms both the demand and effectiveness of this approach, and we are proud to support its further expansion,” said EIF CEO Marjut Falkstad.

“SMEs in the EU and CEE employ over 65% of the region’s people and generate more than 55% of economic value, but some of their ambitions still outstrip their access to affordable finance. By expanding our InvestEU partnership with the EIF, we are increasing the volume of lending and delivering tangible benefits: better terms, longer horizons and now access to capital markets through mini-bonds. This way, entrepreneurs with good ideas can invest, innovate and grow faster, with fewer constraints, while at the same time boosting growth and opportunities in the CEE region,” said Teodora Petkova, Head of UniCredit Central and Eastern Europe.

The expanded agreement introduces mini-bonds as a suitable financing instrument, supporting SMEs’ access to debt capital markets and diversifying sources of financing beyond traditional bank lending.

About UniCredit

UniCredit is a pan-European commercial bank with a unique offering in Italy, Germany, Central and Eastern Europe. Our purpose is to empower communities to thrive, delivering best-in-class value for all stakeholders, unlocking the potential of our clients and our people across Europe. We serve more than 15 million clients worldwide. They are at the heart of everything we do in all our markets. UniCredit is organised across four key regions and two centres for product development, corporate and individual solutions. This allows us to be close to our clients and to leverage the experience of the entire Group to develop and offer the best products in all our markets. Digitalisation and our commitment to ESG principles are key drivers of our services. They help us deliver excellence to our stakeholders and create a sustainable future for our clients, our communities and our people.



About the EIB

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is the long-term lending institution of the European Union, owned by its Member States. It provides long-term financing for sound investments to contribute to the achievement of EU policy objectives. The EIB supports projects that have a significant impact on economic growth, innovation and job creation. It is also one of the largest providers of climate finance, supporting projects that contribute to environmental sustainability and the fight against climate change.

About EIF

The EIF is part of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group, and its core mission is to help European micro, small and medium-sized enterprises access finance. The EIF designs and develops venture and growth capital, guarantees and microfinance instruments specifically targeted at this market segment. In this role, the EIF advances the EU's objectives in the areas of innovation, research and development, entrepreneurship, economic growth and employment.