European Competitiveness Fund proposal

In a nutshell

18th May 2026

DG GROW, C1 'Access to Finance'

European Commission

Why ECF?

The current offer of EU funds does not provide **large-scale, seamless funding support** on the entire investment journey to address market failures...

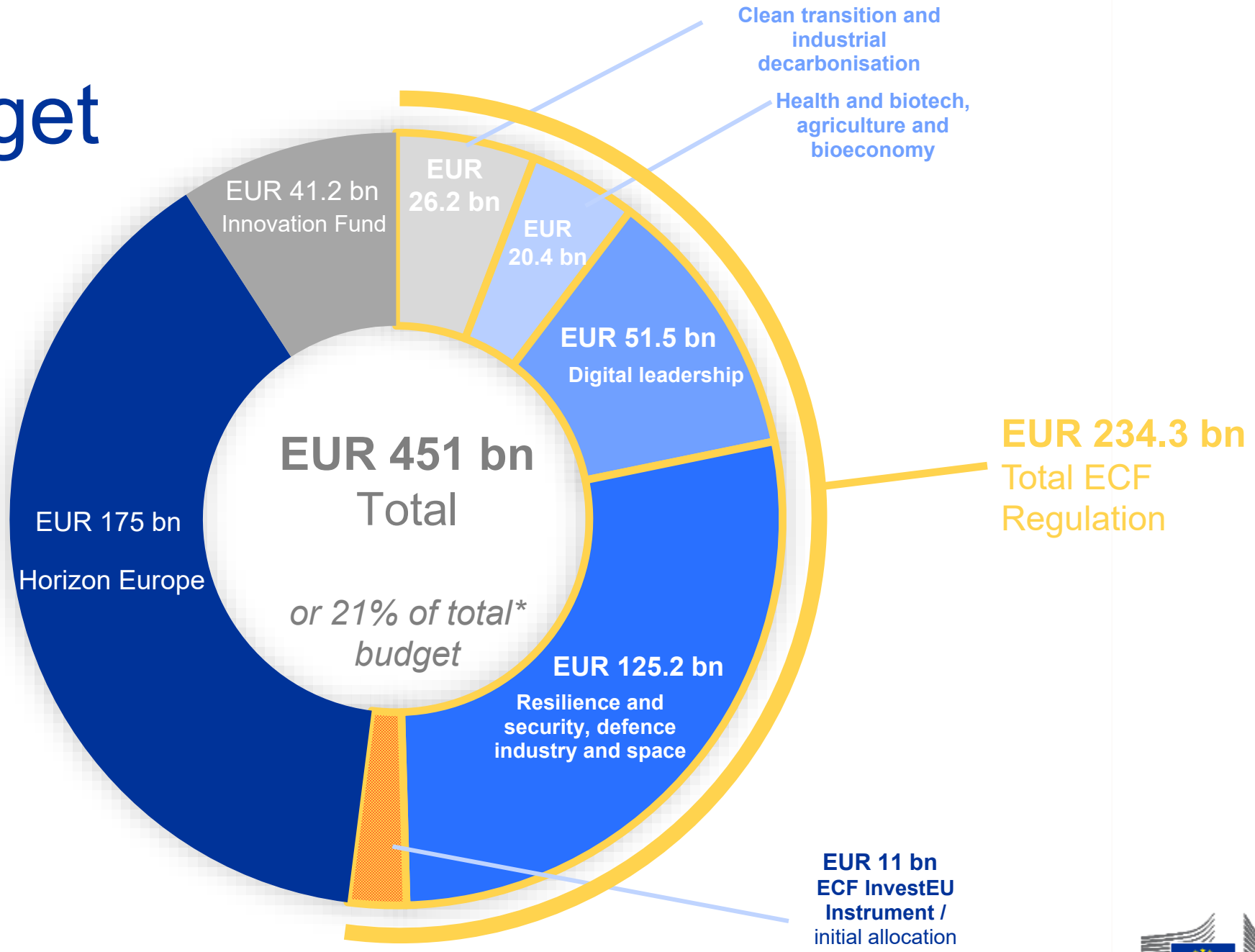
...with insufficient **flexibility** to respond to unforeseen needs...

.. it is also **insufficiently linked** with other sources of public (national, regional, local) and private funding, which themselves are very fragmented...

.. there is a financing and investment gap in the latter stages of innovation, development and scaling up of companies, in strategic sectors essential for supporting the competitiveness of the EU economy, including the **"valley of death" scaling-up problem..**

Impact assessment on the ECF

ECF Budget



* excluding Innovation Fund

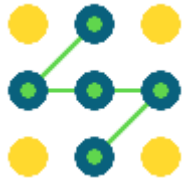
Key features

SCALE

Pulling together **investment power of € 451 billion** at EU level for our industrial leadership in strategic sectors.

IMPACT

To deliver one powerful financial toolbox to leverage and mobilise private investment.



SEAMLESS INVESTMENT JOURNEY

To fund entire investment journey from research to scale up, and global manufacturing.

SINGLE RULEBOOK

To simplify rules and make funds get faster to applicants.

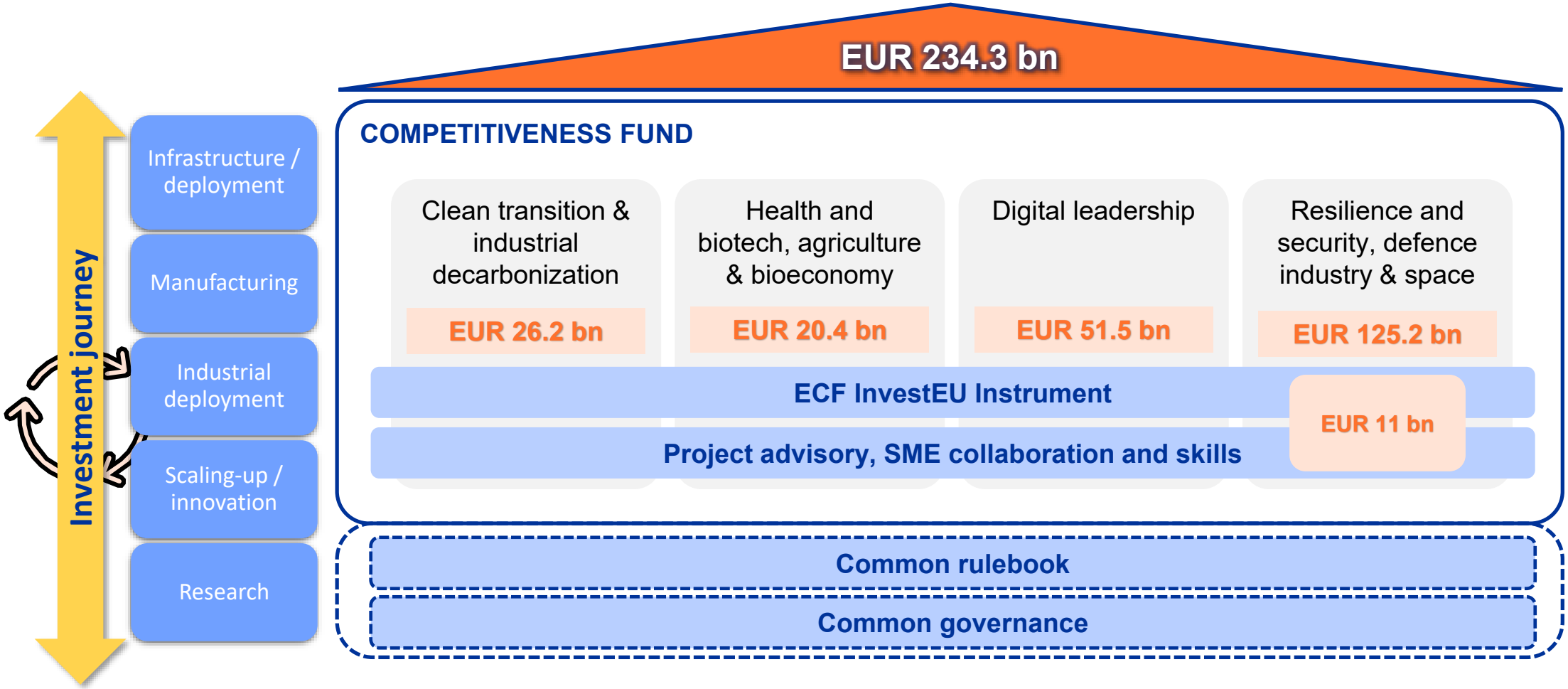
POLICY COHERENCE

To ensure coherence between industrial and research policies.

AGILITY

To react quickly to new priorities.

ECF architecture



Single rulebook

Chapter I

ECF Toolbox

Grants, procurement and industrial policy coordination tools

- Work Programmes
- Accelerated and Targeted Actions for Competitiveness
- Single Market value chains builder
- EU Tech frontrunners
- Production Ramp up actions
- Top Ups for IPCEIs

ECF InvestEU Instrument

- Budgetary guarantee
- Financial instruments
- Blending operations
- Support to start-ups and scale-ups
- EU and Member States Compartments

Horizontal and cross-cutting activities

Project advisory	• Advisory for the identification, development, structuring, procuring and implementation of investment projects. • Capacity building. • Market development activities.
Business acceleration services	• Facilitating access to ECF funding. • Matchmaking with private investors. • Promoting financial literacy of entrepreneurs.
EU4Business Network	• Building on the Enterprise Europe Network and the European Cluster Collaboration Network. • Offering advisory and partnership services free of charge to SMEs.
SME actions	• Dedicated, sector-specific actions targeting start-ups, SMEs and small midcaps under each policy window.
Support for skills development	• Supporting skills development in strategic sectors.
Beneficiary service desk	• Single electronic data interchange area for participants comprising all ECF activities.

ECF architecture

↳ Tight connection with Horizon Europe

- **Single rulebook approach:** common rules on alternative, combined and cumulative funding, EU Preference, Classified information, Accelerated and Targeted Actions for Competitiveness.
- **Common scope:** the ECF policy windows to ensure **strategic focus**.
- **ECF single work programmes:** the work programmes of the ECF policy windows will include collaborative R&I activities in a specific dedicated part to ensure **seamless investment journey from research to manufacturing and deployment**. This might include contributions to European Partnerships, where necessary to meet the ECF objectives.
- **Common governance:** including shared and coordinated advisory bodies. ECF Comitology procedure will apply to ECF WPs, including for collaborative R&I activities.
- **Common and coordinated toolbox:**
  - **Exclusivity** of the ECF InvestEU Instrument, with the exception of financial instruments under the EIC Fund.
  - **EIC:** To be implemented in close coordination with ECF policy windows. ECF work programmes to set out priorities that will steer EIC challenges.
  - **Scale up:** All scale up financing under the MFF 2028-2034 to take place under the ECF.
  - **Competitiveness Seal** with common basic characteristics between ECF and Horizon Europe.
- **Defence**: ECF is specific programme for defence research & innovation.

ECF InvestEU Instrument

Budgetary guarantee and financial instruments	• Maximum amount of budgetary guarantee: **EUR 70 billion** (can be increased by up to 20%). • Minimum amount under ECF InvestEU Instrument: EUR 17 billion (non-thematic support). • To be increased by contributions from the policy windows.
Exclusivity clause	• InvestEU as only instrument for budgetary guarantees and financial instruments for internal policies.
Privileged option	• Available to the four policy windows. • To unlock additional public and private investments.
Scale-up facility	• Targeting high-growth SMEs, small mid-caps and mid-caps.
Open architecture	• Relying on implementing partners including the EIB Group, international financial institutions and national promotional banks.

Health, Biotech, Agriculture and Bioeconomy

Chapter V

Specific objectives

- Health:
  - Fostering innovation and competitiveness of the health sector while ensuring supply security and the industrial capacity and capability to manage future serious cross-border threats to health; health promotion and disease prevention; innovation and resilience of health systems.
- Biotechnology:
  - Contributing to the development and scalable production and uptake, availability and accessibility of medicinal products, medical devices, diagnostics and other medical countermeasures.
- Bioeconomy:
  - Fostering an innovative and competitive bioeconomy in the areas of bio-based plastics and polymers, bio-based fibres, bio-based chemicals, bio-based construction materials, biofertilisers and biopesticides, technologies: biorefineries, advanced fermentation
- Agriculture:
  - Fostering the competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience and fairness of the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and rural and coastal areas ad contribute to long term food security in the Union

Thank you

Find out more on the ECF website

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