

EU level investments in Cleantech in SouthEastern Europe

Clean Tech
for SEE



Clean
European
Futures

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Cleantech investments from EU funding in South Eastern Europe

EU27 climate and energy funding and participation (2014 - Oct 2025) : overview by programme and SEE share

| Programme | Total funding (€bn) over 2014/2025 | Share of SEE in total funding | Total projects/participants |
|----------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Horizon Europe | 12,7 | 8,0% | 33 990 |
| EIB loans | 137,3 | 5,0% | 1 442 * |
| CEF | 53,9 | 12,4% | 5595 |
| IF ** | 10,6 | 8,3% | 408 |
| Total | 214,5 | 7,2% *** | 41 434 |

* number of project lines, since the EIB data includes loans covering multiple projects and did not display the exact number of participants or beneficiaries.

** for the Innovation Fund : 2021 - Oct 2025 only

*** weighted average across all programmes

How to read this table : All analyses cover EU27 energy and climate funding, from 2014 to Oct 2025 (except for the Innovation Fund : 2021 - Oct 2025).

For example, Horizon Europe total funding was € 12,7 billion over the period. 8% of this funding went to beneficiaries in SEE, which represented 10,5% of the total participants.

Key Findings:

Overall EU public energy and climate funding : the weighted average of SEE financing is only 7,2% of the total funding (while SEE represents 9% of EU population), largely driven by the underperformance of SEE with EIB loans (which make up close to two thirds of the total funding analysed).

- **Horizon Europe**

SEE funding rate is below its demographic share. The SEE region displays higher participation rates than funding rates, indicating that SEE beneficiaries tend to get less funding than other participants, even when their application is successful.

- **EIB (a proxy for InvestEU)**

Only 5% of the funding went to SEE. Except Greece, SEE countries are disproportionately less funded compared to their demographic weight. This is concerning given EIB's expected expanded role in the next EU budget via InvestEU. Enhanced EU green and industrial objectives call for a correction of this geographical and financial imbalance.

- **Connecting Europe Facility**

SEE funding rate (12,4%) is above its demographic weight (9%). For once, Romania and Bulgaria funding rates match their demographic weights.

- **Innovation Fund**

The low number of SEE beneficiaries is compensated by a few large projects. Just 5 out of 13 projects make up 90% of the Innovation Fund financing in SEE, mainly in the cement sector. Iron and steel (0 projects) as well as non-ferrous metals (1 project) are almost absent, despite the upcoming free allocation phase-out in these sectors. **The SEE region has only one project in the area of manufacturing components, although it is a major technology area of the overall Innovation Fund project portfolio.** This may call for a special attention, especially in view of the Clean Industrial Deal implementation and given the good manufacturing base in SEE.

1. Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. The present analysis focused on energy and climate related projects over 2014 - 2025.

Ticket size : the median EU contribution per participant was 250k€, and the average was 373k€.

Private sector and SME participation : the private sector makes up 70 % of Horizon participants, and 23 % of Horizon total participants are identified as SMEs (be it from the private or public sector).

SEE participation and funding rates :

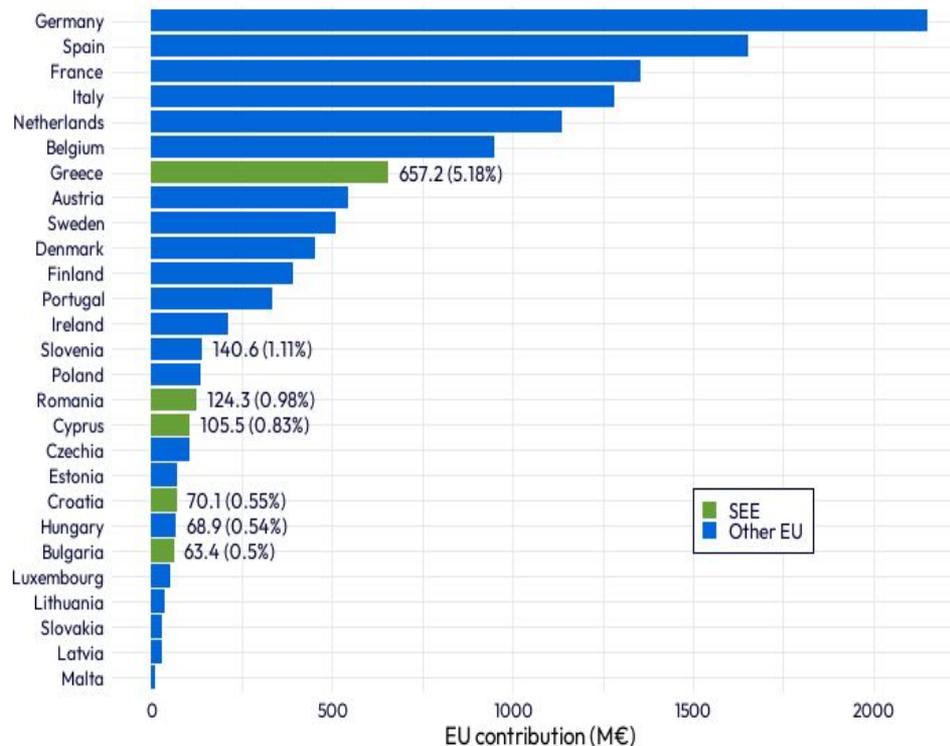
- Participants from SEE represent 10,5 % of the total participants over 2014 - 2025
- Horizon funding in SEE represents 8 % of the total funding over 2014 - 2025.

The difference between the participation rate and the funding rates indicates that participants from SEE get less funding than other participants.

Proposed change for MFF 2028 - 2034: As part of the next long-term EU budget 2028-2034, the Commission is proposing to **double the overall Horizon Europe budget.**

Horizon financing by location

EU27, 2014 - 2025. Total: 12,68 b€



Source : Clean European Futures based on Horizon Project Portfolio Dashboard, data retrieved on 08/10/2025

2. InvestEU programme

The InvestEU programme was established in 2021, and consists of three components: the InvestEU Fund, the InvestEU Advisory Hub and the InvestEU Portal. The InvestEU Fund consist of an EU budget guarantee of a total of €26,2 billion.

Member States can top up the InvestEU guarantee with additional contributions (from Cohesion funds or RRF funds) through Member States Compartments. The Commission has signed contribution agreements with seven Member States: Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Czechia, Finland, Malta and Spain.

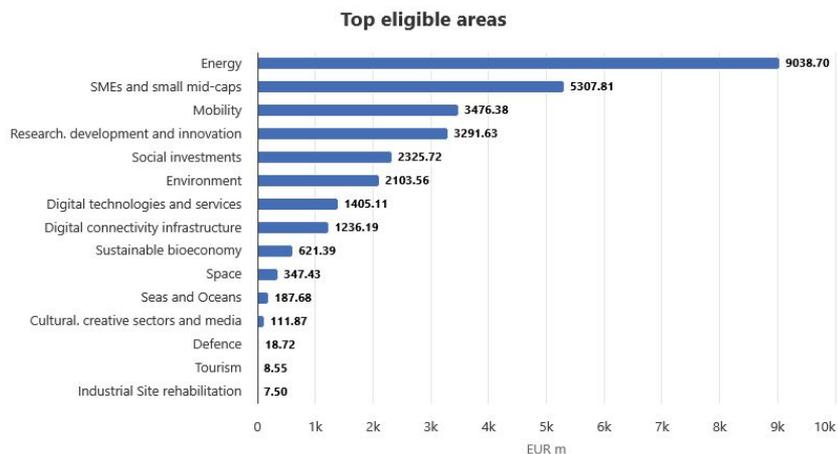
For example, the guarantee amount signed under the [Romania Member State Compartment](#) amounts to € 724 million, primarily under the EIF (90%), and a smaller share through the EBRD. 70% is allocated to the SME window, 16% to the sustainable investment window, and 12% is yet to be distributed between these two windows. For [Bulgaria](#), the total guarantee amount under the MS compartment is € 275 million. For [Greece](#), it is € 527 million.

InvestEU Programme: an overview

InvestEU Fund:

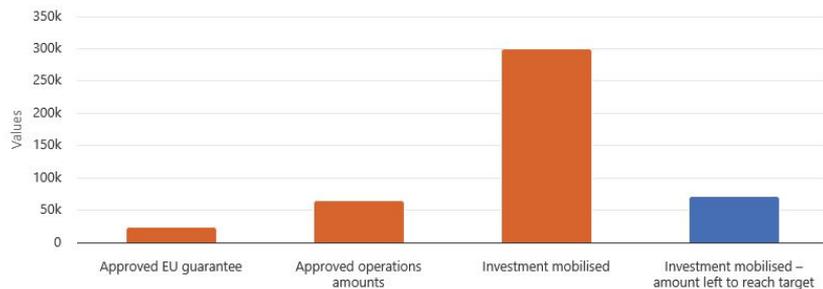
- Single fund bringing together many different EU-level financial instruments
- EUR 26.2 billion budgetary guarantee underpinned by 40% provisioning of the EU budget (from NGEU and MFF)
- Mobilising EUR 372 billion of additional investments across Europe, of which 30% to contribute to climate objectives
- Strong policy focus and strategic investments incorporated under the policy windows





Data as of 30 April 2025

InvestEU implementation (EU compartment and MS compartment) in EUR million



Target investment mobilised by 2027: EUR 372 billion

Since 2021, InvestEU implementing partners have approved [€ 62.3 billion of operations](#). This refers to the loans or investments they have signed thanks to the InvestEU guarantee.

The EIB and the European Investment Fund are the main implementing partners, with 75% of the total EU budget guarantee.

Other SEE relevant [InvestEU implementing partners](#) include : the Council of Europe Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development , the Bulgarian Development Bank.

Energy and SMEs are the top 2 eligible areas under InvestEU.

EIB loans as a proxy for InvestEU

The EIB is one of the main implementing partners of InvestEU. In the absence of publicly available disaggregated data on InvestEU operations, data from the [EIB financed projects portfolio](#) was used as a proxy for InvestEU.

Over 2014-2025, the EIB financed a total of 1 442 projects in the energy and green industry, representing a total investment of € 137,2 billion.

Ticket size: the median size of these projects is € 43 million.
The average is €94 million.

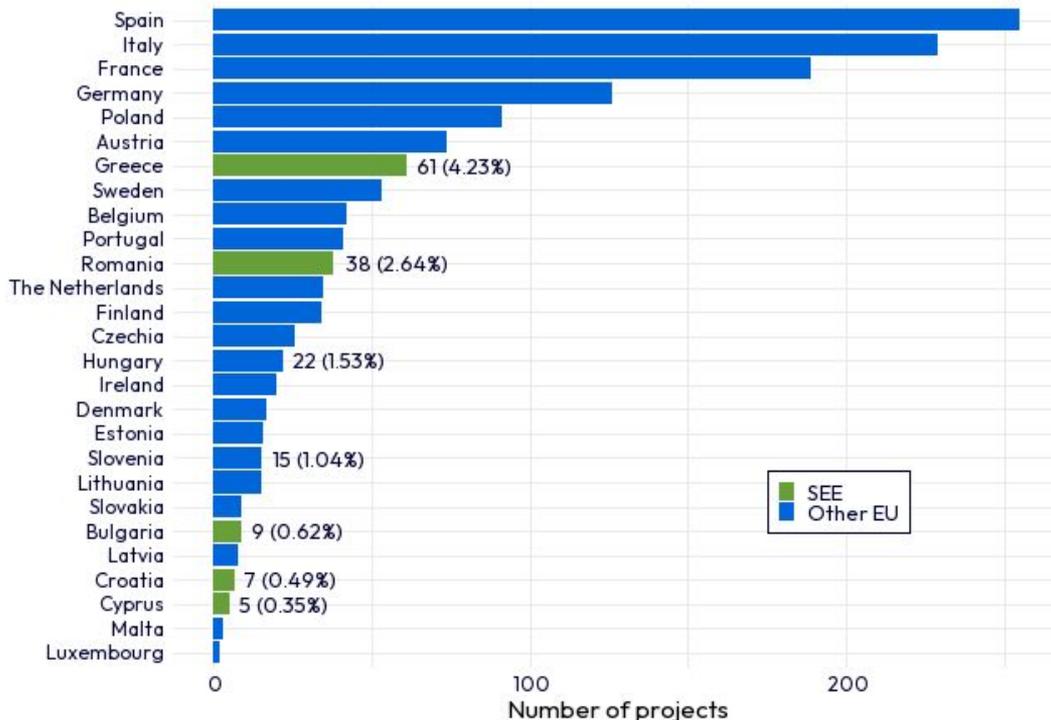
SEE participation and funding rates :

- Participants from SEE : 8,3% of the total EIB energy and green industry projects over 2014 - 2025
- EIB funding in SEE : 5,0% of the total EIB energy and green industry funding over 2014 - 2025

The difference between the SEE project share (8,3%) and the SEE funding share (5,0%) indicates that SEE projects tend to be smaller than the EU average.

EIB energy and green industry projects by location

EU27, 2014 - 2025. Total projects: 1 442



Source : Clean European Futures based on EIB financed projects, data retrieved on 09/10/2025

The SEE region in EIB financing

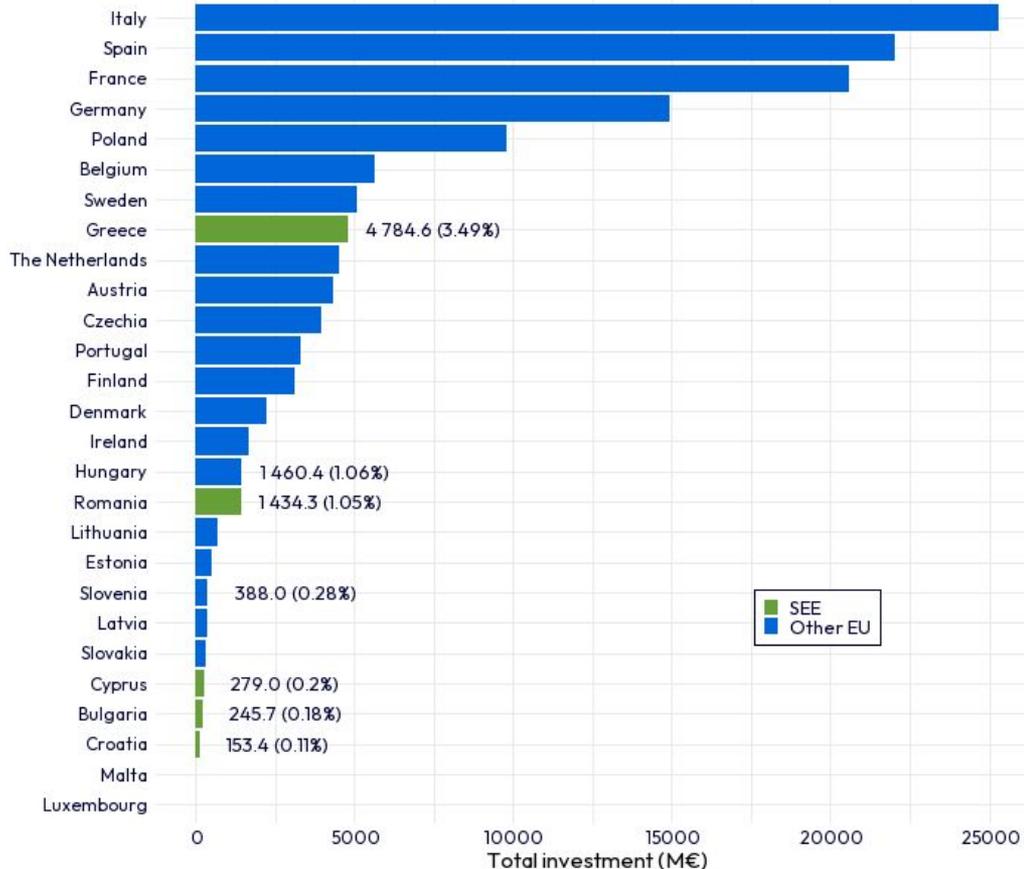
Except Greece, **SEE countries' financing rates lie below their demographic weight.**

For example, if Romania's financing rate matched its demographic weight (4.24% of EU27 population), it would have four times more investment from the EIB.

Projects in Romania amount on average to € 38 millions, much below the EU27 average (€ 94 millions). The largest project in Romania is a € 200 million investment programme in electricity distribution signed in December 2024 with the electricity distributor Distribuție Energie Electrică România.

EIB investments in energy and green industry (M€)

EU27, 2014 - 2025. Total investment: 137.2 b€



Source : Clean European Futures based on EIB financed projects, data retrieved on 09/10/2025

Sectoral analysis of the green industry projects financed by the EIB

Green industry projects make up 36% of the total EIB financed projects analysed (the remainder are energy projects)

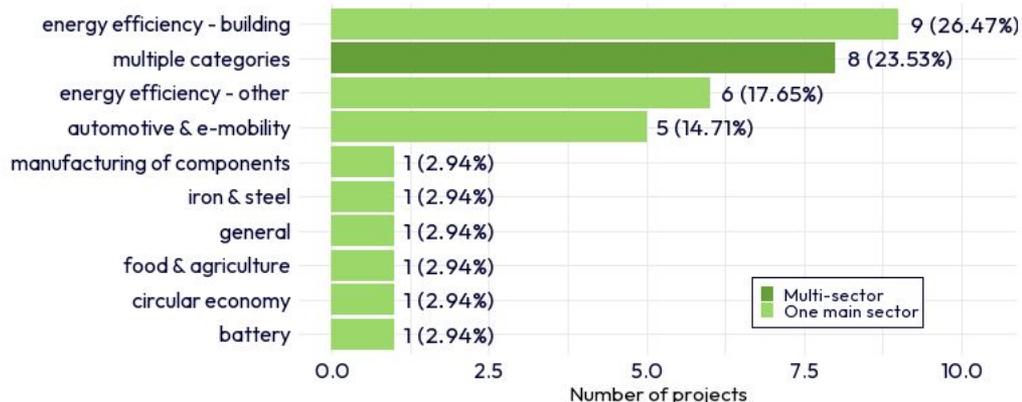
In SEE, the EIB financed 34 industrial projects that can be considered green. **Energy efficiency in buildings is the top subsector**, followed by other energy efficiency projects and e-mobility projects. In the multiple categories projects, energy efficiency also features high, followed by circular economy projects and e-mobility.

The average EIB green industry project in SEE lies at € 16 million, far behind the average of green industry projects in the EU27 which is € 74 million. As an illustration, EIB's single largest investments in the green industry in SEE are : a project in the copper industry in Bulgaria for an amount of about € 89 million, an aluminium processing project in Greece for € 75 million and a European semiconductor project in Romania for € 60 millions.

The sectoral distribution of green industry projects financed by the EIB in SEE is quite aligned with the EIB's overall project portfolio distribution, where energy efficiency in buildings, energy efficiency in other sectors, as well as automotive & e-mobility are the top three sectors (see annex for the detailed breakdown of the multiple categories' projects).

EIB green industry projects by subsector in SEE

SEE 2014-2025. Total: 34



Source: Clean European Futures based on EIB project data, data retrieved on 09/10/2025.
Note: see annex for detailed methodology

Looking Ahead: Next EU Budget

Proposed change for MFF 2028 - 2034:

The EC proposed to set up a new EU Competitiveness Fund (ECF) to merge a dozen programmes from climate to defense and health, including InvestEU. The EC proposes that 43% of the ECF be dedicated to [climate and biodiversity objectives](#). Under the ECF, a single project could benefit from a wide range of tools, loans, subsidies, equity, public procurement, and guarantees.

InvestEU should benefit from an EU budget guarantee of up to €70 billion to back loans for EU-wide projects, a 2,7x increase from the current € 26,2 billion.

The Competitiveness Fund includes the idea of “EU preference” to support EU manufacturing and strategic interests. However, the [EU Competitiveness Fund proposal](#) only mentions sovereignty in relation to digital and space technologies, which can be striking in an era of accelerated geoeconomic competition revolving around clean technologies and manufacturing capacities for the green transition.

3. Connecting Europe Facility

Over 2014 - 2025, the EU contributions to the Connecting Europe Facility amounted to 58,9b€, close to 80% dedicated to transportation projects, the remainder to energy.

Ticket size : the median contribution per participant is around 900 k€ and the average lies at 1 M€.

SEE participation and funding rates :

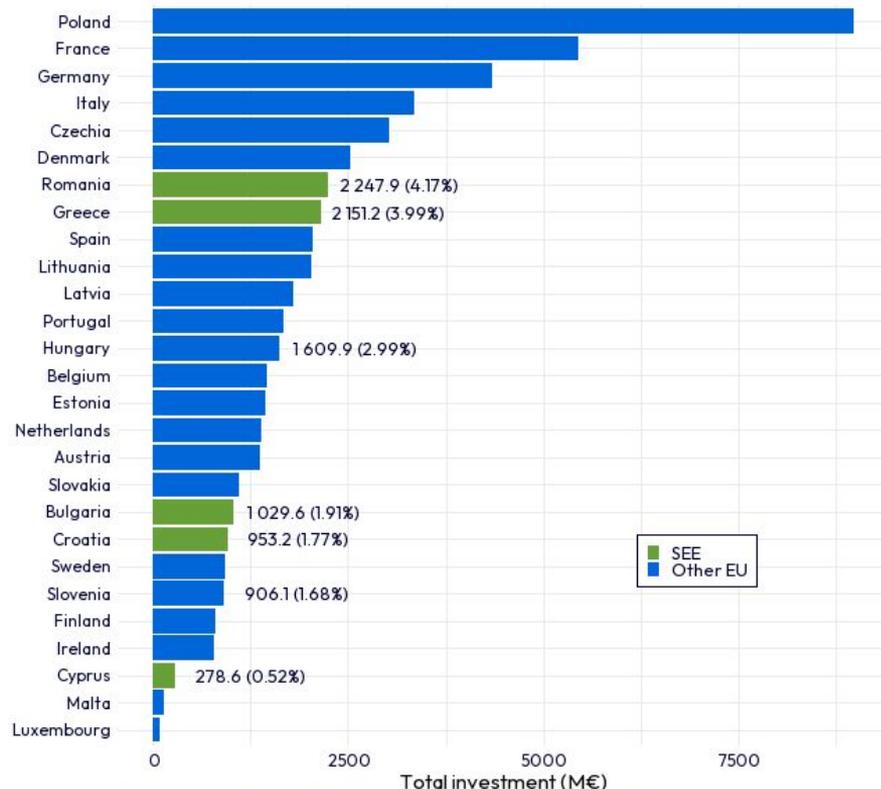
- CEF participants from SEE : 10,3 % of total over 2014 - 2025
- CEF funding in SEE : 12,4 % of total over 2014 - 2025

As a region, SEE is over performing with CEF participation and funding rates above its demographic weight (9%).

For once, Romania and Bulgaria funding rates match their demographic weights (4% and 1,4% respectively). Greece, as usual, overperforms with a funding rate almost twice as high as its demographic weight.

Connecting Europe Facility investments (M€)

EU27, 2014 - 2025. Total investment: 53.9 b€

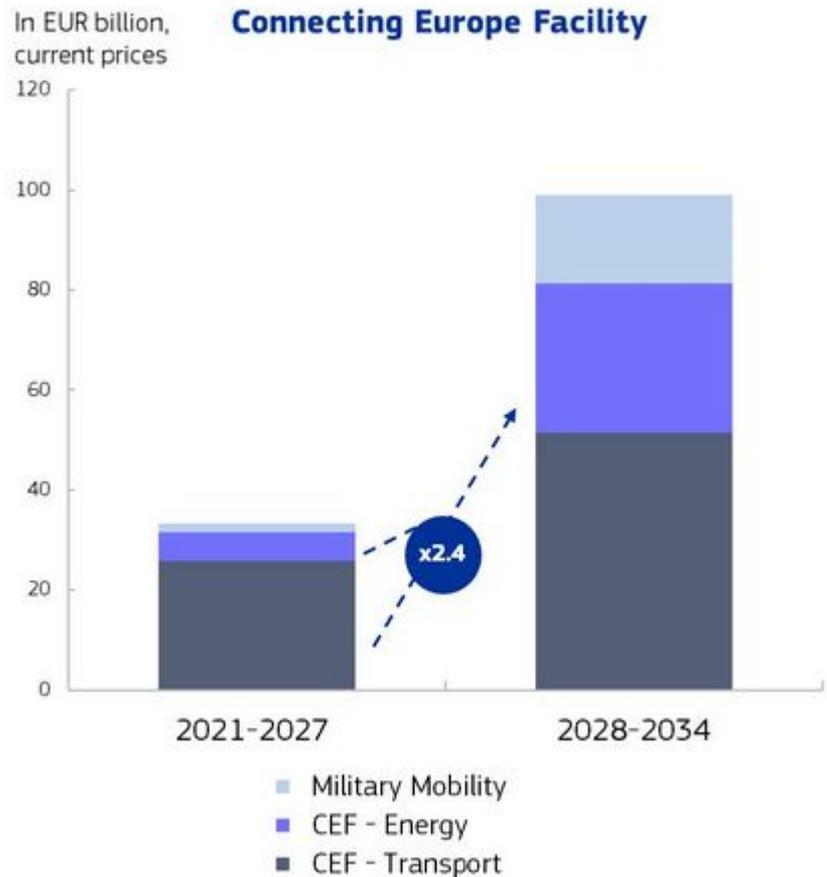


Source : Clean European Futures based on CINEA's Project Portfolio Dashboard, data retrieved on 24/10/2025

Looking Ahead: Next EU Budget

Proposed change for MFF 2028 - 2034:

The EC proposed to set aside 29,9 b€ for energy related projects via the CEF, which will [more than double across programmes](#). It is a considerable increase for energy projects within the EC, which barely got 8 b€ in total over the past decade. The shift towards a more integrated Energy Union to ensure energy security and competitiveness should support clean energy infrastructure across borders, especially electric grids. The proposal to significantly increase the CEF Energy window is quite positive in this respect.



4. Innovation Fund

Over 2021 - October 2025, the Innovation Fund (IF) total investment amounted to € 10,6 billion.

Ticket size : The median lies at € 30 million and the average at € 55 million. Innovation Fund projects range between 1,4 to 359 M€.

SEE participation and funding rates:

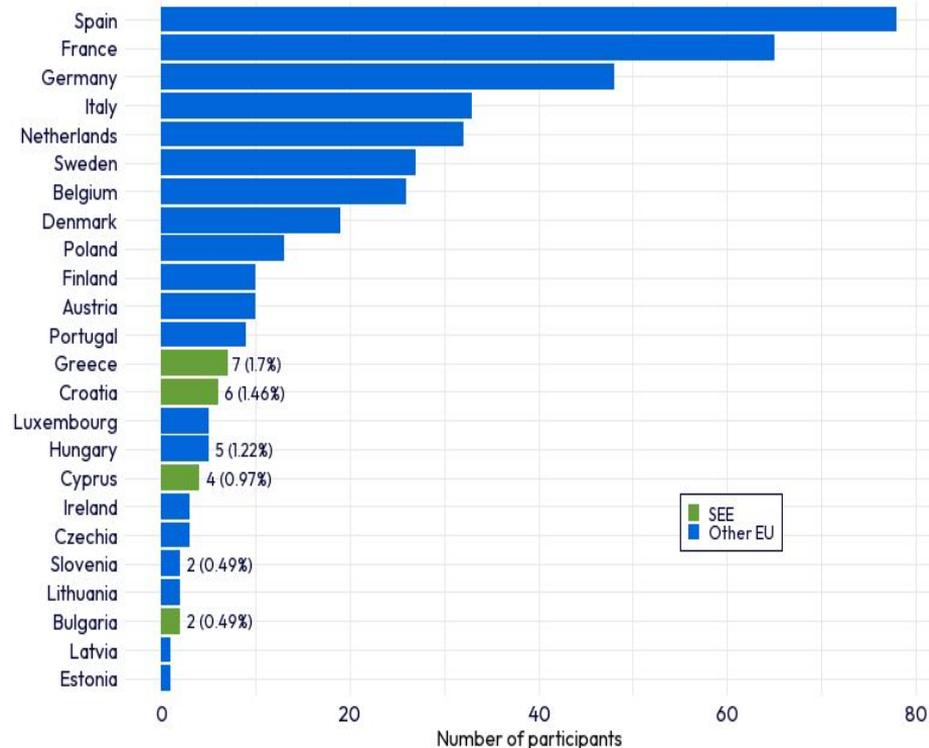
- IF participants from SEE : 4,7% of the total participants to the IF over 2021-Oct 2025
- IF funding to SEE : 8,3% of the total IF funding over 2021-Oct 2025

The SEE region displays a very low participation rate to the Innovation Fund. It can be explained by the absence of Romanian participants, as well as the underperformance of Greece which usually drives SEE participation rates upwards.

The funding rate is quite high in comparison, indicating the presence of large projects that compensate for the low number of participants from SEE. A detailed project list is available in annex.

Innovation Fund participants by location

EU27, 2021 - 2025. Total participants: 411



Source : Clean European Futures based on CINEA's Project Portfolio Dashboard, data retrieved on 31/10/2025.

Sectoral analysis of Innovation Fund projects in SEE

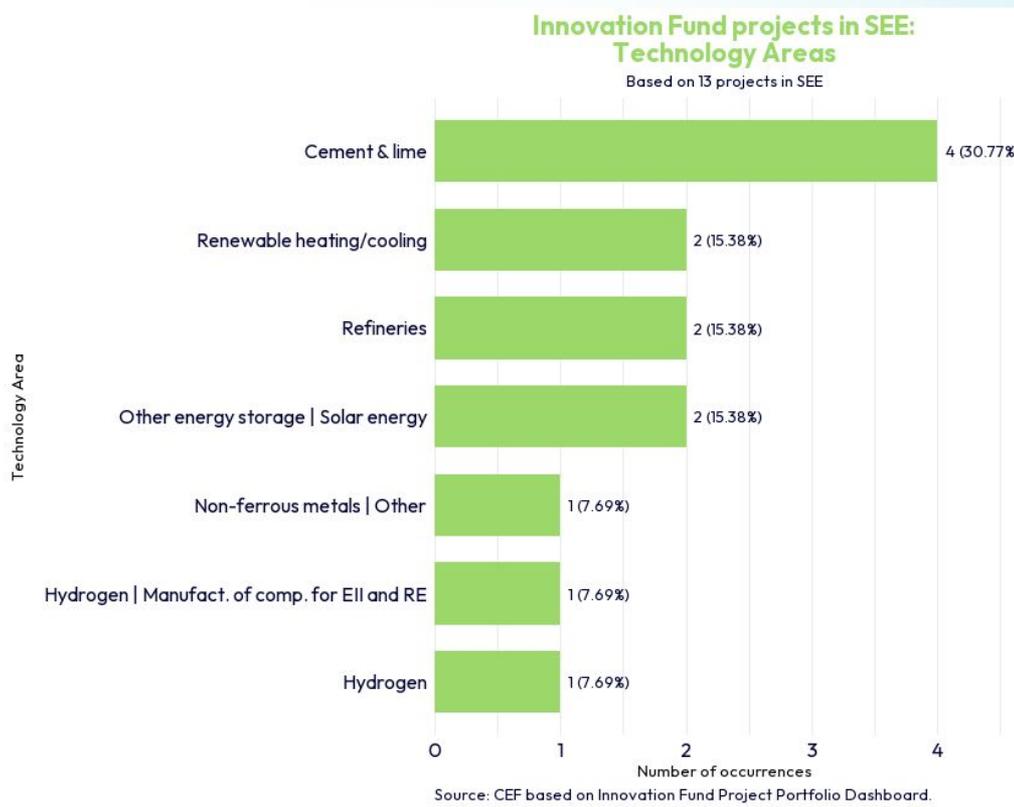
Five projects make up 90% of the Innovation Fund financing in SEE over the considered period, 4 large cement decarbonisation projects paired with CCS and one large refinery project of low carbon hydrogen and methanol production with CCS. Renewable projects are much smaller in size. See annex for the detailed list of projects.

The SEE region has only one project in the area of manufacturing of components, although it is a major technology area of the overall Innovation Fund project portfolio (see annex), and a key element of EU domestic supply chains for clean techs part of the EU Clean Industrial Deal.

In the SEE region, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia stand out as countries where the industry still makes up around 20% of the GDP. In Greece it is 15%. However as of the end of October 2025, Bulgaria only had one Innovation Fund project, and Romania none.

The region is home to aluminium factories and iron and steel manufacturers which will need to adapt to the new carbon price, but the only aluminium project financed by the Innovation Fund in SEE is located in Greece.

Despite free allowances, the cement industry is already very well represented in the Innovation Fund portfolio. This means that the presence of free ETS allocations is no excuse for the low representation of non-ferrous metals (aluminium) and iron and steel projects.



Looking Ahead: Next EU Budget period

Expected evolution in the next EU budgetary period :

The Innovation Fund could be part of the proposed EU Competitiveness Fund in the next budget. As an extra budgetary instrument, the Innovation Fund is not impacted by MFF negotiations. However, several elements of the 2023 ETS revision should take effect in the coming years. This revision already increased the allowances allocated to the Innovation Fund from 450 million to 530 million. The financial envelope available under the Innovation Fund depends on the price of the ETS allowance.

The implementation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism starting in 2026/7 is paired with a progressive free allocation phase-out in the following sectors : cement, aluminium, fertilisers, iron and steel, hydrogen and electricity. With the free allocation phase-out, we should expect an increase of the Innovation Fund financing of decarbonisation projects in sectors that are currently under-represented in the Innovation Fund project portfolio (see annex), such as aluminium or iron and steel.

National Findings

Over the four EU funding instruments considered, Greece is often performing above its demographic weight, with participation and funding rates that are much higher (regularly around twice) than its share of EU population (2,31%) - the only exception being its participation rate to the Innovation Fund, but the funding rate from the Innovation Fund is nonetheless quite high because the projects involved are expensive.

Cyprus is usually overperforming but this may be an effect of its small size.

Croatia overperforms in Horizon participation, CEF funding, and Innovation Fund funding.

On the other hand, Romania and Bulgaria are usually under-represented compared to their demographic weight in the analysed EU instruments. For example, if Romania's financing rate matched its demographic weight (4,24% of EU27 population), it would have four times more investment from the EIB.

In the SEE region, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia stand out as countries where the industry still makes up around 20% of the GDP. In Greece it is 15%. However as of the end of October 2025, Bulgaria only had one Innovation Fund project, and Romania none.

Recommendations:

1. **Rebalance EU funds geographic distribution through targeted access mechanisms for SEE innovators to the new Competitiveness Fund,** which will be the central instrument to boost competitiveness of European companies. SEE displays higher economic and company valuation growth than the EU average. Yet, the region overall tends to struggle to access EU funds, especially from the EIB. It is urgent to address this misalignment between Europe's competitiveness potential and opportunities through measures tailored to the profile of innovators from SEE.
2. **Adapt financial instruments to SEE's financing profile and preserve grant-based support.** The SEE region tends to perform better in EU instruments that are partially or fully grant-based (Horizon and Innovation Fund: 8% funding share, CEF: 12%) than loan-based (EIB: 5%). To support SEE decarbonisation and green competitiveness, the EU needs to guarantee that at least 50% of clean-industry allocations to SEE are disbursed as grants or blended finance combining grants and concessional loans, not pure loans.
3. **Increase absorption capacity and leverage Horizon Europe's expected increase to fill SEE's funding gap.** SEE represents over 10% of Horizon beneficiaries but only 8% of funding, indicating smaller average EU contributions. With Horizon Europe expected to double in the next EU budget, there is an opportunity to correct this imbalance.
4. **Align Innovation Fund allocations with countries' industrial profiles and potential.** Current disparities suggest that the Innovation Fund does not fully leverage on SEE's industrial strengths. **Countries where industry represents about 20% of GDP stemming from industry** should receive project allocation proportional to their industrial weight and decarbonization potential - not just one project over four years. The Innovation Fund "project development assistance" should earmark capacity to SEE (e.g. 15%). Additionally, the Innovation Fund should build a diversified portfolio avoiding an over-concentration on single sectors or technologies; small and medium-size projects in SEE tend to focus on renewable solutions, which could be further supported to enhance SEE innovation.