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## **EU: funding for 300 small businesses operating in Roma communities in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and North Macedonia**

EU funds will be available for businesses to create jobs in Roma communities. The European Investment Fund (EIF) has signed a guarantee agreement with REDI Economic Development S.A. (REDI) that will make €4.65 million available to enhance access to finance for entrepreneurs operating in Roma communities in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and North Macedonia, the European Commission announced in a statement. The initiative, which is part of the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), will ensure “financing for more than 300 small businesses and the creation of at least 1,000 jobs”. The funds will be available to microenterprises active in marginalised Roma communities, who will be able to take out loans of up to €25,000. REDI will also provide “technical assistance to entrepreneurs to support outreach to these Roma communities and understand their specific business development needs”. This is the first EU financial instrument specifically aimed at Roma communities. “The EU is a union of equality: it actively promotes the social and economic inclusion of people who are marginalised in our societies”. The EU-funded programme will help address persistent discrimination in the European Union and will “allow entrepreneurs from marginalised Roma communities to fulfil their business ambitions”, said Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit.

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