

**Question for written answer E-003252/2017
to the Commission**

Rule 130

Monica Macovei (ECR) and Patricija Šulin (PPE)

Subject: Cyber-attacks on SMEs

There has been a worrying increase in the number of cyber-attacks on SMEs. Symantec's 2016 Internet Security Threat Report shows that the number of attacks more than doubled between 2011 and 2015, with nearly half of SMEs affected. Many SMEs still do not realise the extent of the risk that they face. Although larger companies proportionally face more attacks than SMEs on average, SMEs have weaker defence systems in place. The problem is that cybercriminals see SMEs as vulnerable targets and frequently use social engineering techniques to trick employees into opening emails containing malware. In 2015, phishing practices targeting employees increased by 55 %, while cases of ransomware rose by 35 %. This issue is important not only for the security of companies but also for that of individual users.

Given that the Commission is aware of the urgency of these cyber threats, what is it doing to support SMEs to help them improve their cyber-security capabilities?