

MSS Holds First Anniversary Press Conference, Sharing One Year of Key Achievements and Future Policy Direction

The Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS) held a press conference at SVC Seoul on Thursday to mark the first anniversary of the current government, sharing key outcomes from the past year and outlining the policy direction for the period ahead. Minister Han Seong-Sook led the session, presenting the ministry's achievements before taking questions from the press corps.

Key Achievements over the Past Year

Despite a challenging external environment – including the impact of U.S. reciprocal tariffs and the ongoing Middle East conflict – the past year produced a number of significant results.

SME Exports reached a record USD 118.6 billion in 2025, the highest annual figure ever recorded for Korean SMEs. The momentum has continued into 2026, with Q1 exports again setting an all-time quarterly high – marking two consecutive years of record performance. K-beauty and online exports both reached new highs, broadening the base of Korea's export activity beyond traditional channels.

Domestic consumption, which had been subdued by a combination of external shocks and weakened sentiment, has shown signs of steady recovery. The ministry's regional commerce revitalization strategy, the "Sangsaeng Payback" campaign – in which 15.64 million citizens participated – the Korea Grand Festival, and the Spring Companion Festival, which brought together over 33,000 small business owners, all contributed to a gradual but sustained improvement in consumer activity.

Venture investment rebounded strongly following the release of the Four-Point Venture Power Strategy late last year. Q1 2026 saw venture fund formation reach KRW 4.4 trillion – the highest Q1 figure on record – and new venture investment reach KRW 3.3 trillion, the second highest on record, reflecting a successful return of private capital to the ecosystem.

Startup support infrastructure has been substantially expanded. The Startup One-Stop Support Centers, which opened across 19 locations nationwide in December last year, surpassed 10,000 consultations within five months – establishing themselves as a key access point for entrepreneurs across the country. A Restart Support Headquarters was also launched to help entrepreneurs treat failure as a foundation for their next attempt, backed by a KRW 1 trillion Restart Fund to be built over the next five years.

The "Startup of All" project, launched in January, received 63,000 applications – the largest response ever recorded for a government competition – reflecting the breadth of entrepreneurial interest across the country.

To channel that energy beyond the capital region, the ministry is designating startup cities anchored by regional science and technology institutes. Daejeon, Daegu, Gwangju, and Ulsan have been prioritized for the first half of this year, with six additional cities to be designated by 2027.

On the administrative side, the ministry has reduced application documentation requirements by 50%, launched a crisis alert notification service for at-risk small business owners, and introduced a dedicated technology theft reporting channel. A further improvement is on the way: 64 separate policy platforms are being consolidated into a single integrated SME Growth Platform to significantly improve accessibility for businesses.

Future Policy Direction

Going forward, the ministry is formalizing a shift in its fundamental policy orientation – from protection toward growth and investment. Rather than providing broad-based support, the ministry will assess each company's growth potential upfront, directing technology development and investment support toward high-potential companies while offering tailored recovery and business transition assistance to those facing operational difficulties. Short-term, function-specific subsidies will increasingly give way to longer-term, package-based support designed to build a genuine growth ladder for SMEs at every stage.

The ministry will also institutionalize a non-capital region priority principle across its full policy portfolio. A non-metropolitan support target system and differential incentive structures will be introduced to meaningfully narrow the gap between the capital region and the rest of the country, and to give regional SMEs a more substantive foundation for growth.

“The achievements of the past year belong not to the government but to the micro business owners and entrepreneurs who kept moving forward without stopping,” said Minister Han Seong-Sook. “We will keep running alongside them – without wavering – so that their efforts translate into something even greater.”

For more news and updates on Korea's SME and startup policies, follow the Ministry's official **LinkedIn** page:
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/mss1357>

