

Thank you for this judicious question. Indeed, this political guideline will be the core of our work in the following years. However, building our future should not prevent us to remember what has been done, such as the “Think Small First Principle”. It is not a coincidence if our political guideline touched upon several concrete measures listed in my speech. If your question is “what is your guideline concretely doing for SMEs in Europe?” I will answer you that our guideline as whole should be seen as supporting European SMEs! Several points have direct positive impacts without spelling them out. Two examples:

- European SMEs will directly benefit from our work toward a fairer taxation and trade; and will be automatic beneficiaries of our fight against unfair advantages of big foreign tech companies.
- Our “Conference on the Future of Europe” will create a real opportunity for SMEs and their representatives to communicate their challenges to European institutions. To insure this, we will create specific consultations on SMEs during this conference.

There are however - at least - three points I can give you more details concerning adaptations coming from the “Think Small First Principle”.

Firstly, as you have probably seen, one of our ambitions is a “dedicated SME strategy” aiming to help SMEs to access to finance. With this strategy we will create a private-public fund to initiate investments for SMEs and support the development of European innovative and ambitious companies. Moreover, applying the Think Small First Principle also means helping SMEs to take as many advantages as possible from the European Green Deal and our strategy to “fit Europe for the digital age”. These initiatives will directly support industries where SMEs are playing a key role. Consequently, a dedicated fair share of our investment in technology and our “cohesion funds” will be negotiated and defined for SMEs. And it should be the major part of it. Furthermore, our “New Circular Economy Action Plan” will be adapted to support SMEs reaching our “zero-pollution ambition” and integrating our “Farm to Fork Strategy” and “Biodiversity Strategy for 2030”. With defined European resources helping SMEs to grow and innovate while respecting our values and ambition, European SMEs will be both protected and supported by our policies.

Secondly, as I have said during my inauguration speech, finding adapted labor force is one of SMEs greatest challenges to compete and innovate. To support entrepreneurs with small capacities to invest in education, we will create - based on the model of the “South East-European Center for Entrepreneurial Learning”- Centers for entrepreneurship. Those centers will be in charge of creating free-of-charge online methods of learning on entrepreneurship and digital education. This measure will be part of our updated “Digital Education Action Plan”. Finally, as affirmed by the President of the European Commission “we need more nimble innovators with breakthrough technologies” to increase the innovative and entrepreneurial capacity of our market. An efficient strategy will inevitably pass through supporting women entrepreneurship and innovation and combining the “Think Small First Principle” with European values on equality. Following the implementation our “Work-Life Balance Directive”, adapting our “European Social Fund+” and with a tailored help from our Centers for Entrepreneurship, our new “European Gender Strategy” will include specific measures for women at work in Europe to support the creation of new companies.

I am proud such an initiative can be taken by the first European Commission to reach gender parity in our history.