

EN
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Answer given by Mr Breton
on behalf of the European Commission
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Under the Commission's Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) strategy¹, SMEs will be supported by a network of up to 240 Digital Innovation Hubs, in each region of Europe, underpinned by investment from the Digital Europe Programme and Structural Funds. The ambition is to deliver user-friendly and targeted advice on digitalisation and connect support structures so that every SME has support nearby. To achieve this, the Commission will expand Digital Innovation Hubs in connection with Startup Europe² and the Enterprise Europe Network³ to provide a seamless service within local ecosystems.

In addition, the Commission will, with the support of Digital Europe Programme, develop Digital Crash Courses for SME employees to become proficient in areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity and blockchain. Digital Innovation Hubs will act as intermediaries between SMEs and universities/local training providers.

On 1 July 2020 the Commission adopted the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience⁴. Its 12 actions focus on skills for jobs, including digital skills⁵, by partnering up with Member States, social partners and companies, including SMEs, to work together for re- and upskilling. The Commission has also proposed a Council Recommendation aimed at modernising vocational education and training⁶.

The Digital Education Action Plan⁷ proposes to scale up the 'Digital Opportunity Traineeships'⁸ to allow SMEs to find people ready to use and improve their digital skills. This will allow SMEs to offer temporary work placements to students and apprentices from Vocational Education and Training, teachers, trainers and other educational staff from school, adult and higher education sectors.

The InvestEU programme⁹ will facilitate access to finance for SMEs focusing, among others, on supporting digital transformation of businesses.

¹ Announced in March 2020

² <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/startup-europe>

³ <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=22832&langId=en>

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/content/european-digital-strategy>

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9723&furtherNews=yes#navItem-relatedDocuments>

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en

⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-opportunity-traineeships-boosting-digital-skills-job>

⁹ https://europa.eu/investeu/home_en