



## Press Release

Contact: Stéphanie Lepczynski  
Phone: +32 473 331 375

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
00h00 CET 22 May 2014

**José Manuel Barroso, Neelie Kroes  
Headline Star-Studded Line Up for  
Brussels Launch of**

# European Digital Forum

**New think tank led by the Lisbon Council, a leading Brussels-based think tank, and Nesta, off to a strong start**

**Open Letter to Contenders for European Commission President among first initiatives**

(BRUSSELS, Belgium – 22 May 2014) – Today, in Brussels, **José Manuel Barroso**, president of the European Commission, and **Neelie Kroes**, vice-president of the European Commission and commissioner for the digital agenda, join a star-studded group of digital entrepreneurs and thought leaders for a **high-level summit in Brussels to formally launch the European Digital Forum**. Together with the **Startup Europe Partnership (SEP)**, a platform for scaling up the most promising European technology startups, the two initiatives were developed in collaboration with the European Commission's Directorate-General for communications networks, content and technology.

The speakers are a “who’s who” of Europe’s digital entrepreneurship scene, including **Sherry Coutu**, angel investor and non-executive director, London Stock Exchange Group; **Kaj Hed**, chairman of Rovio and member of the Leaders Club; **Pierre Louette**, deputy CEO and group general secretary, Orange; **Simon Schaefer**, founder and CEO, the Factory (Berlin); **Mark Silverstein**, head, product, tech, IP and policy, Spotify; **Kaya Taner**, CEO and co-founder, Applift and member of the European board, Application Developers Alliance; **Boris Veldhuijzen van Zanten**, founder and CEO, The Next Web and member of the Leaders Club.

The Brussels launch comes on the heels of the European Digital Forum’s success in launching an **Open Letter to Contenders for European Commission President**. Signed by the EU’s Digital Champions, this call to action urges the candidates to build their digital strategies on a compelling, four-point plan put forward by these ambassadors for Europe’s digital agenda. The Open Letter received responses from Jean-Claude Juncker, candidate for the European People’s Party (EPP) and Guy Verhofstadt, candidate for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE).

Says Neelie Kroes, vice-president of the European Commission in charge of digital agenda: “Digital is key to our economic recovery – and every politician needs to start “thinking digital” in everything they do. Thought leadership from the new European Digital Forum will raise the profile of this topic – and link up what tech entrepreneurs need and what public policy offers.”

The day-to-day operations of the European Digital Forum are managed by the Lisbon Council and Nesta, two of Europe’s premier innovation think tanks, with support and funding by a high-powered coalition of founding partners, including the European Investment Fund, Telefónica, BBVA and Orange.

For more information, visit [www.europeandigitalforum.eu](http://www.europeandigitalforum.eu)

**About Nesta:**

Nesta is the United Kingdom's innovation foundation. It helps people and organisations bring great ideas to life. It does this by providing investments and grants and mobilising research, networks and skills. It is an independent charity enabled by an endowment from the national lottery. Its website is [www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk).

**About the Lisbon Council:**

The Lisbon Council for Economic Competitiveness and Social Renewal asbl is a Brussels-based think tank and policy network. Established in 2003 in Belgium as a non-profit, non-partisan association, the group is dedicated to making a positive contribution through cutting-edge research and by engaging politicians and the public at large in a constructive exchange about the economic and social challenges of the 21st century. Its website is [www.lisboncouncil.net](http://www.lisboncouncil.net).

**About Telefónica:**

Telefónica is one of the largest telecommunications companies in the world in terms of market capitalisation and number of customers. From this outstanding position in the industry, and with its mobile, fixed and broadband businesses as the key drivers of its growth, Telefónica has focused its strategy on becoming a leading company in the digital world. The company has a significant presence in 24 countries and a customer base that amounts to more than 320 million accesses around the world. Telefónica has a strong presence in Spain, Europe and Latin America, where the company focuses an important part of its growth strategy. Telefónica is a 100% listed company, with more than 1.5 million direct shareholders. Its share capital currently comprises 4.551.024.586 ordinary shares traded on the Spanish Stock Market (Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao and Valencia) and on those in London, New York, Lima and Buenos Aires. For more information, visit [www.telefonica.com](http://www.telefonica.com).

**About BBVA:**

BBVA is a customer-centric global financial services group founded in 1857. The Group has a solid position in Spain, it is the largest financial institution in Mexico and it has leading franchises in South America and the Sunbelt Region of the United States. Its diversified business is biased to high-growth markets and it relies on technology as a key sustainable competitive advantage. BBVA ranks among the leading Euro zone banks in terms of ROE and efficiency. Corporate responsibility is at the core of its business model. BBVA fosters financial education and inclusion, and supports scientific research and culture. It operates with the highest integrity, a long-term vision and applies the best practices. The Group is present in the main sustainability indexes. For more, visit the BBVA Innovation Centre website at <https://www.centrodeinnovacionbbva.com/en>

**About the European Investment Fund (EIF):**

The European Investment Fund's (EIF) central mission is to support Europe's micro, small and medium-sized businesses (SME's) by helping them to access finance. EIF designs and develops venture and growth capital, guarantees and microfinance instruments, which specifically target this market segment. In this role, EIF fosters EU objectives in support of innovation, research and development, entrepreneurship, growth, and employment. EIF is part of the European Investment Bank Group. EIF's total net commitments to private equity funds amounted to over € 7.9bn at end 2013. With investments in over 435 funds, EIF is a leading player in European venture due to the scale and the scope of its investments, especially in high-tech and early-stage segments. EIF's guarantees loan portfolio totalled over € 5.6bn in over 300 operations at end 2013, positioning it as a major European SME guarantees actor and a leading micro-finance guarantor. For more information: <http://www.eif.org>

**About Orange:**

Orange is one of the world's leading telecommunications operators with sales of € 43.5 bn in 2012 and had 166,000 employees worldwide at 30 September 2013, including 102,000 employees in France. Present in 32 countries, the Group had a total customer base of more than 232 million customers at 30 September 2013, including 175 million mobile customers and 15 million fixed broadband customers

worldwide. Orange is also a leading provider of global IT and telecommunication services to multinational companies, under the brand Orange Business Services. Orange is listed on the NYSE Euronext Paris (symbol ORA) and on the New York Stock Exchange (symbol ORAN). For more information: [www.orange.com](http://www.orange.com) and on Twitter: @orange, @orangegrouppr, @orangebusiness.

**For more information, contact:**

Sarah Reardon  
Nesta (United Kingdom)  
Tel: +44 20 7438 2606  
Email: [sarah.reardon@nesta.org.uk](mailto:sarah.reardon@nesta.org.uk)

Stéphanie Lepczynski  
The Lisbon Council (Belgium)  
Tel: +32 2 647 9575  
Email: [stephanie.lepczynski@lisboncouncil.net](mailto:stephanie.lepczynski@lisboncouncil.net)

**theLisboncouncil**  
think tank for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

**Nesta...**

*Telefonica*

**BBVA**

**orange™**

**EI** EUROPEAN  
INVESTMENT  
FUND