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Features

Wanted: web-entrepreneurs

Europe turns to entrepreneurship to drive innovation and future growth. As the EU prepares to launch its new web entrepreneurship strategy, European Commission Vice-President Neelie Kroes takes a look at how it will help to stimulate Europe's economy and meet the goals of the Digital Agenda ...

Neelie Kroes is also the Digital Agenda Commissioner so it is perhaps no coincidence that her first blog entry for 2013 addresses the need for more technology and web entrepreneurs in Europe.

Tech- and web entrepreneurs come up with ideas and products with the potential to change the way we live, work, play, communicate and collaborate. Their work, according to the Commissioner, can lead to new jobs, sometimes in sectors and markets which don't even exist yet: "These inspirational people are at the cutting edge of the EU's digital economy and economic recovery. We need to celebrate them and ensure that their ideas can start in Europe, and stay in Europe."

So the Commission is looking for [Europioneers](#) [1] in web or mobile who have demonstrated the skill, innovation, drive, passion and leadership to be called a true technology pioneer. This new prize (see box) will be judged in two categories: European Tech Entrepreneur of the Year and European Young Tech Entrepreneur of the Year for candidates less than 30 years old in 2013.

"I am very happy that I am not the only one in the Commission who recognises that entrepreneurs can help us build a way out of our current crisis," said Commissioner Kroes, adding that an important part of that plan is igniting and supporting Europe's web and tech start-ups.

The Commissioner said in a video interview on [LeWeb](#) [2] in December that she also wanted Europe to be the place for web entrepreneurs, to help the EU to react and adapt more quickly to the new opportunities and demands of the digital economy. Over the course of this year, the Commission plans to unveil a series of measures to increase the momentum, including a Web-Entrepreneurship Action Plan to support, promote and celebrate these entrepreneurs of the digital age.

The Commissioner also favoured the idea of a Leaders' Club to encourage web entrepreneurship as a career. Several world-class web entrepreneurs will be recruited to act both as role models and advisors to the European Commission as it tries to strengthen Europe's entrepreneurial culture.

In the coming months, the Commission will also seek to:

- Leverage web start-up investment by creating a European network of web business accelerators;
- Create the Start-up Europe Partnership to strengthen the web start-up and technology investment ecosystem; and
- Foster web talent in Europe through education, such as Massive Online Open Courses.

The economic crisis facing Europe and the world has bought home the reality that a job for life can no longer be taken for granted. “This is a tough reality, but also one filled with exciting possibilities for those with the courage and the right support to dream and create their own futures,” says Commissioner Kroes. “Tech- and web entrepreneurs are some of those inspirational creators: I want Europe to be the place where they can dream, grow, and prosper.”

Got what it takes to be a Europioneer?

[Nominations are open](#) [1] until 14 February for tech entrepreneur of the year. The competition is organised in partnership with [The Next Web](#) [3]. There will be a public round of voting to select the five finalists and the prizes will be presented at an award ceremony in April.

More info:

- VP Commissioner Kroes’ full [blog post](#) [4]
- [Interview](#) [2] with VP Commissioner Kroes on LeWeb

Cloud partnership ... ready, set, adopt!

Data is the lifeblood of the internet, and the cloud is a vessel to store, process, retrieve and use it anywhere, from any connected device. Europe is a key player in cloud developments and 2013 is an important year as the European Cloud Partnership takes shape ...

Cloud computing (CC) is a paradigm shift away from today’s decentralised IT systems. It is already transforming providers and users of IT services and looks set to change the way other industrial sectors meet their own IT needs, as well as the way citizens interact with their computer and mobile devices. Although in its early days, basic CC services are already widely used in the form of web-mail and iCloud, for example. New services are being launched every day, helping to raise awareness of cloud computing in general. But many in the business world, in particular, need more convincing of the wider benefits. Concerns over data security, privacy and legal issues, and questions about ownership and fail-safes are hindering wider take-up.

Experts believe that the EU needs to become not only cloud friendly but cloud active to fully realise the benefits of cloud computing. Besides allowing for the provision of CC in its various forms, Europe must address the needs of end-users and protect citizens’ rights. At the same time, it should foster development of a strong CC industry in Europe. This is one of the key actions of the [European Cloud Computing Strategy](#) [5], entitled ‘Unleashing the Potential of Cloud Computing in Europe’, which was adopted by the European Commission in September 2012.

The Steering Board of the new European Cloud Partnership (ECP) met for the first time in Brussels on 19 November 2012, kicking off a process in which public authorities and industry will work together to build the EU Digital Single Market for cloud computing, in line with the Strategy.

The ECP seeks to leverage public-sector buying power to shape the growing and maturing market for CC services. Chaired by Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of Estonia, the Steering Board brings

together technology CEOs and government representatives responsible for IT procurement. It will deliver strategic advice to the European Commission Vice-President, Neelie Kroes.

Commissioner Kroes said she needs this top-level input so that all of Europe can see the full benefits of cloud computing, and quickly. “President Ilves and all [Board members](#) [6] are going to give no-nonsense, action-oriented advice to get the European Cloud Partnership moving,” she noted.

Most importantly, the Board will work to raise public awareness and map out practical solutions to overcome existing barriers to CC adoption in the public sector. It aims at making “cloud readiness and adoption” a political priority. In addition, the Board supports the Commission’s work on cloud-computing standards and certification schemes, as well as efforts to identify pilot projects in the area of cross-border and interoperable cloud, likely to be set in motion by 2014. For example, this could include projects on mission-critical areas of business and public life, such as eID, smart cities, eHealth, eEducation, research, and digital content services which build on existing large-scale pilots.

More info:

- ECP Steering Board public [statement](#) [7]

Collective awareness ... how to turn it into an engine for future growth?

As the world faces possibly its toughest-ever challenge (financial, environmental and societal), experts ask if future technologies can do more to promote sustainable, responsible growth? A report in IEEE Technology and Society Magazine asks: Can collective awareness be an engine for sustainability and ethics?

Business-as-usual models of future growth, including technological developments, are no longer an option, suggests a report in the current issue of IEEE’s flagship magazine. It says this systemic crisis will require innovative organisational, social and governance models that go beyond today’s technology-driven, closed R&D cycles. Collaborative innovation, which fosters social awareness by unleashing the power of collective intelligence made possible by the social internet and ‘big data’ trends, is the way forward, according to the report.

Existential as it sounds, these are deadly serious ideas permeating the private and public sectors alike. Take, for example, the growing trend in industry to demonstrate greater corporate social responsibility (CSR) alongside profit-making endeavours. National governments and the European Commission are also keen to find ways of helping the ‘World 2.0’ deal with the pressing socio-economic challenges of tomorrow, including health, energy, ecosystems, public services, food security, civic infrastructure, development or poverty reduction.

Collective Awareness Platforms (CAPs) are an EU-supported initiative to leverage the ‘network effect’ of today’s online world (social media, distributed knowledge and Internet of Things) to stimulate social innovation and sustainable measures for future growth. According to the report, the ultimate goal of CAPs, as part of the ‘ICT for societal challenges’ pillar of the European Digital Agenda, is to foster a more sustainable future based on a low-carbon, beyond-GDP economy, and a resilient, co-operative democratic community.

We are already seeing many examples of ideas, projects, or initiatives based on this convergence which address societal problems [by] exploiting the network effect,” notes the report. Some harness the power of peer pressure, exerted through social networks, for positive social change (i.e. reducing

food miles). Others make use of open data to find new solutions to problems, or use the power of the Internet of Things – networked objects and sensors – to improve people’s lives or help them save money or energy (i.e. smart energy solutions).

Starting from the results of the EU-funded Oxford Internet Institute study, ‘Towards a Future Internet: Interrelations between technological, social and economic aspects’, the report describes how plausible scenarios for the evolution of our future digital society oscillate between a big brother-like, closed economic model supporting competitive individual interests, and a collectively aware, open social space exploiting the richness of human connections enabled by technology used for collaboration.

It then analyses under which conditions the latter scenario may evolve, the role that it can play to improve the sustainability (beyond-GDP, low-carbon economy) and ethics (self-regulation, beyond commercially-driven motives) of our current social and economic models, and which strategies the EU can implement to make it possible.

The paper also discusses several open questions addressing how the CAPs can create an extended awareness of the environment and of the consequences of our actions, to make informed and “sustainability-aware” decisions. Ultimately, such platforms can enable dialogue and discussion in civil society to “orchestrate collectively” the most appropriate actions in a truly democratic, informed and non-mediated manner.

More info:

- ‘Collective Awareness Platforms: Engines for sustainability and ethics’ - [IEEE Technology and Society, winter 2012, pp54-62](#) [8]
- ‘CAPs [website](#) [9] (with first call for projects, July 2012)

Contact

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Links

[1] <http://europioneers.com/>

[2] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vv4OnN7dcnM>

[3] <http://thenextweb.com/>

[4] <http://%20http/blogs.ec.europa.eu/neelie-kroes/who-is-europes-best-tech-entrepreneur-and-those-of-tomorrow/%20>

[5] <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/european-cloud-computing-strategy>

[6] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1225_en.htm

[7] <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/../../../digital-agenda/en/news/steering-board-public-statement>

[8] <http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/servlet/opac?punumber=44>

[9] <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/../../../digital-agenda/collectiveawareness>

[10] <mailto:>