



# Masters of Digital 2024

21 FEBRUARY / BRUSSELS & ONLINE

Event Report





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# Masters of Digital 2024

Masters of Digital returned on 21 February 2024 for the biggest edition yet. A day full of discussions that covered the most important digital topics including artificial intelligence, connectivity, cyber security, healthcare data, digital finance, and much more.

Against a backdrop of a turbulent world, the positive role of technology allows us to strengthen our digital resilience, competitiveness, and democracy. That is our vision of Europe by 2030 as clearly we outlined in our recently published Manifesto, Europe 2030: a Digital Powerhouse, paving the way for EU tech leadership in the next 5 years.

What a pleasure to have welcomed over 700 attendees here in Brussels. And even more, we were joined by more than 700 people from 71 countries online, making this one of the biggest editions of Masters of Digital yet. With 54 high-level speakers this year, including Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo, two Commissioners, various ministers from national governments, and Members of the European Parliament, Masters of Digital has again proven its ability to bring digital policy shapers together.

Listening to the valuable insights from our panelists and keynote speakers, some key concluding points stand out:

1. **Europe needs to become a Digital Powerhouse by 2030:** A full house watched Belgian Prime Minister de Croo open the event with an inspiring keynote on what it takes to turn Europe into a digital powerhouse. Fixing the single market issues is essential.
2. Europe's **connectivity** lags behind, we need to see more adoption of **5G** to prepare for roll-out of **6G**, and we need new investment to make it happen.

3. **Healthcare** will see huge progress in the next 10 years as AI changes doctor-patient relationships. The European Health Data Space is pivotal to instilling trust.

4. When discussing **Trans-Atlantic digital cooperation**, EVP Dombrovskis stressed the value of the TTC and the importance of sustaining its momentum beyond the elections.

5. **AI** will have an impact on every business and every industry, it's crucial to support businesses during the implementation phase to ensure that the full innovation potential of AI is effectively seized.

Another important conclusion reached by all speakers –was that to become a Digital Powerhouse by 2030, we have to **end the era of over-regulation**. In recent years, various groundbreaking laws for technology have been adopted putting additional regulatory burden on EU companies. Now it's time to turn the ship towards implementation and **provide companies with the right conditions to scale up in Europe**.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended this year's Masters of Digital, to our speakers and sponsors without whom this successful event would have not been possible. I am very much looking forward to seeing you again in 2025 for the next edition.

## MoD in Numbers



**1500+** Attendees



**72** Countries represented



**54** Speakers



**682,134** Estimated social reach

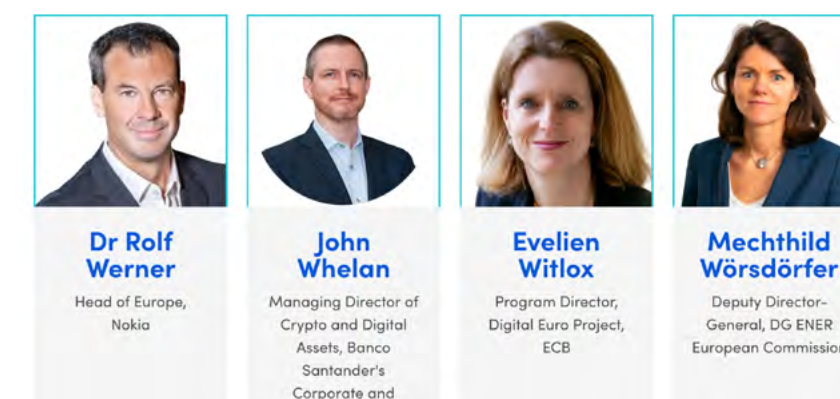
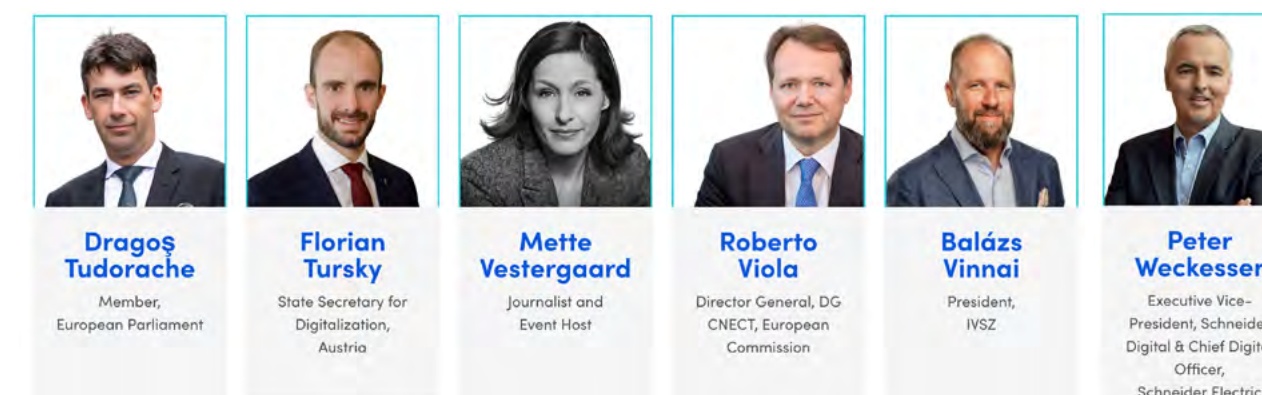
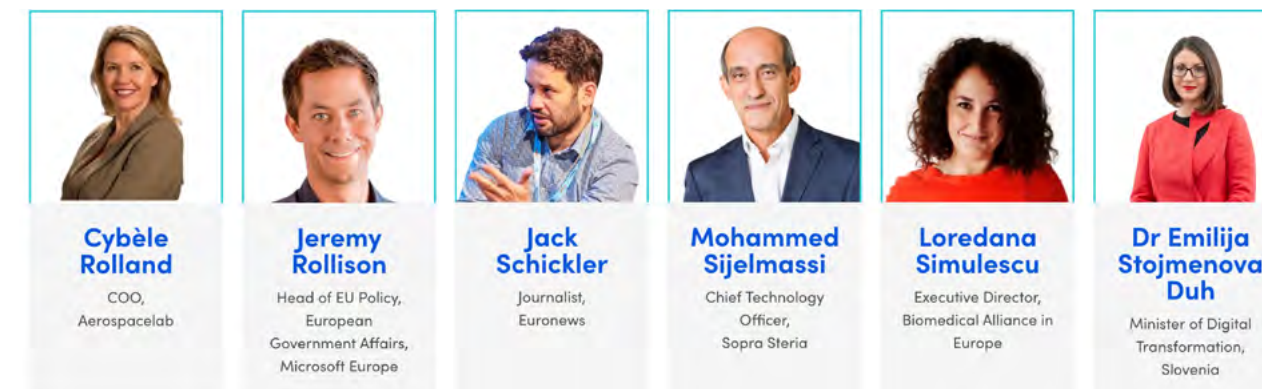
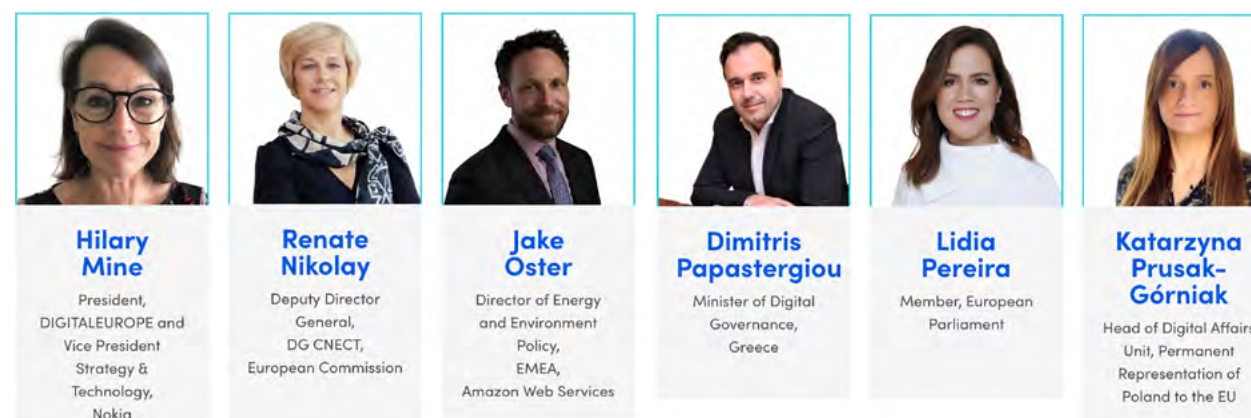
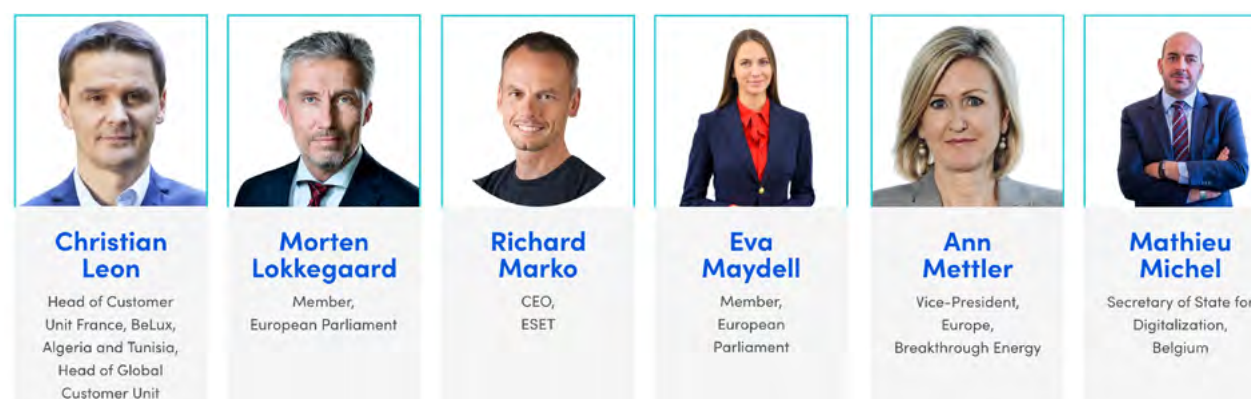
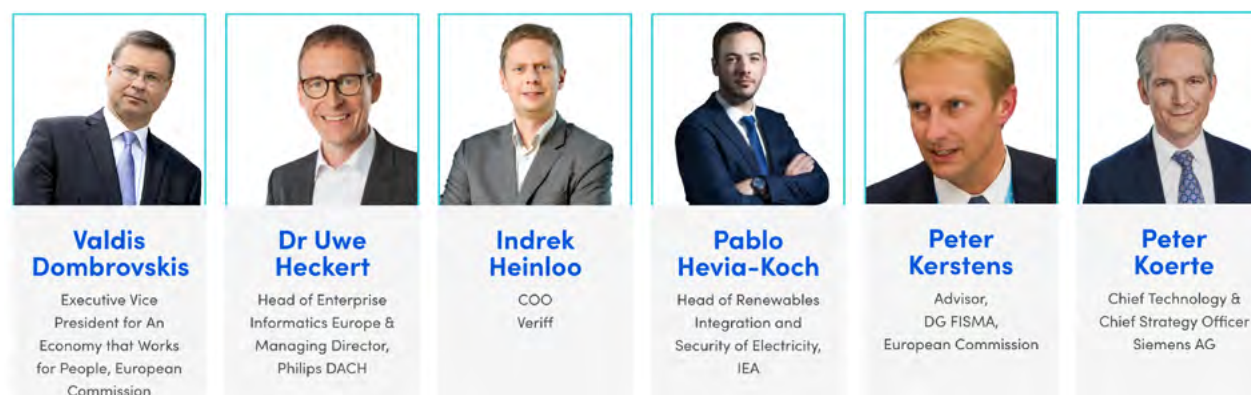
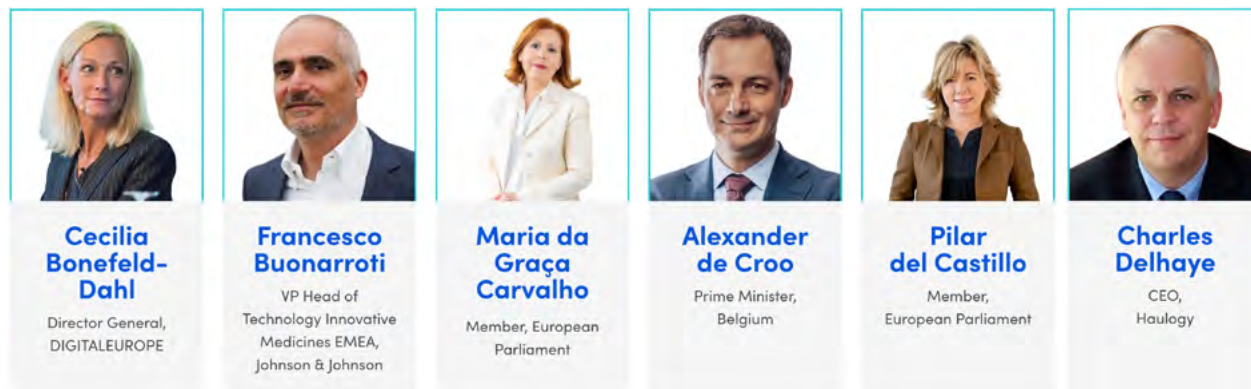


**2,563** Social media interactions





# Speakers





# Opening Welcome Remarks

Masters of Digital 2024 was officially kicked off by the President of DIGITALEUROPE, Hilary Mine, and Director-General of DIGITALEUROPE, Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl delivering opening remarks and delving into the challenges and huge chances of the next years for Europe to become a Digital Powerhouse by 2030.

**Hilary Mine**, Nokia, DIGITALEUROPE

We face a stark truth: By 2030, the EU economy will be digital, or it will not be considered a major economy.

At DIGITALEUROPE, we are convinced of Europe's potential. If we can dream the Digital Powerhouse, we can build it.

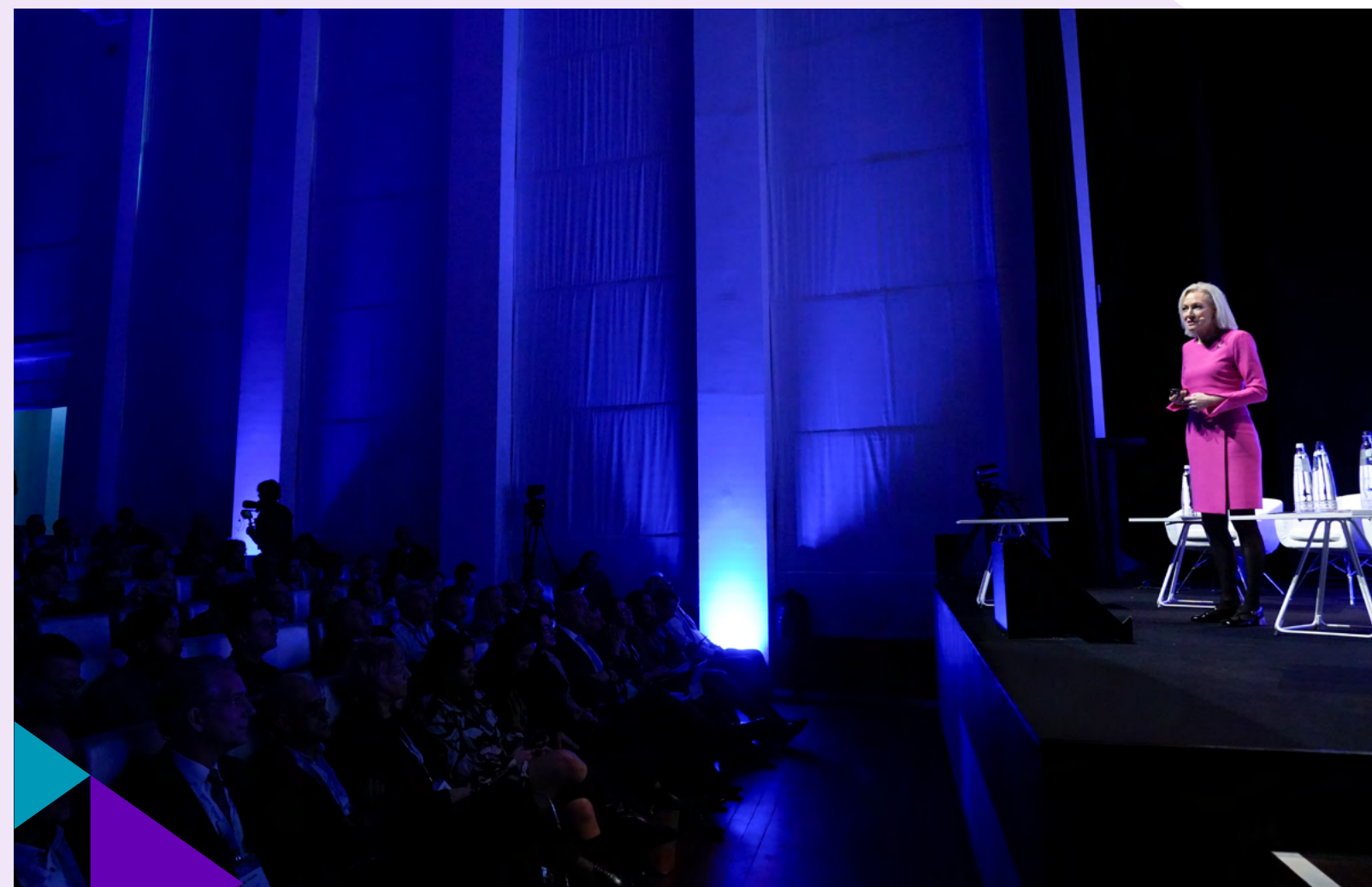
We've done it before, and we can do it again.

But the time to act is now.

**Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl**, DIGITALEUROPE

By 2030 we want to be

- Creators of technology – not just users
- Home to 20 % of the world's biggest tech companies
- One market, not 27
- The best place in the world to innovate and do business
- Skilled and ready to take advantage of technologies
- Partnered with likeminded countries
- Public and private working together
- The continent with the best connectivity
- A unicorn factory
- A Digital Powerhouse.



## OPENING WELCOME REMARKS





# Keynote: Alexander de Croo

One of the early highlights of Masters of Digital 2024 was Belgium Prime Minister Alexander De Croo's electrifying keynote on the importance of competitiveness for the EU as well as his promising outlook on the future of EU's digital policy.

*"The world today is not the world we Europeans have dreamed of; in a world of great powers every lever is being used to take away our power"*

*"We have to play on our strengths, our talents, our diversity, the possibly to work together and stand shoulder by shoulder."*

*"I believe that the best is yet to come."*

*The single market is the greatest asset we have but we are not a single market at all.*

*There is too much regulation.*







## Europe 2030– the Digital Powerhouse

In November 2023, DIGITALEUROPE published its manifesto, 'Europe 2030: A Digital Powerhouse', which puts forward a number of KPIs to measure Europe's progress – on competitiveness, connectivity, digital adoption, skills and other.

We are optimistic about Europe's potential, but we think that things need to change – Europe needs to start acting as one team. That means focusing on our Single Market as an engine of growth, it means embracing technology rather than fearing it. And it means leaning on (and building upon) our strengths, rather than trying to copy or bring down others.



### Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Mathieu Michel** State Secretary for Digitalization, Belgium:

Working on skills is a priority during this presidency. We need to attract, build, and retain skills.

**Renate Nikolay** Deputy Director General, DG CNECT, European Commission:

One of the most significant challenges is how we can create excellence centers that can work together and scale to the next level within Europe.

**Mohammed Sijelmassi** CTO, Sopra Steria:

"If we focus on risk only, we won't transform anything."

**Eva Maydell** MEP:

"It is about time Europe gets back to being the place of big ideas."

**Ann Mettler** VP Europe, Breakthrough Energy:

"This energy crisis could be a stepping-stone for a great opportunity, but we must be strategic due to the volatile geopolitical environment."

**Peter Koerte** CTO & CSO, Siemens:

"Speed and scale matter in the digital world – just 6 months in AI is an eternity. We need to rethink how we can become faster to drive this."



### EUROPE 2030: A DIGITAL POWERHOUSE



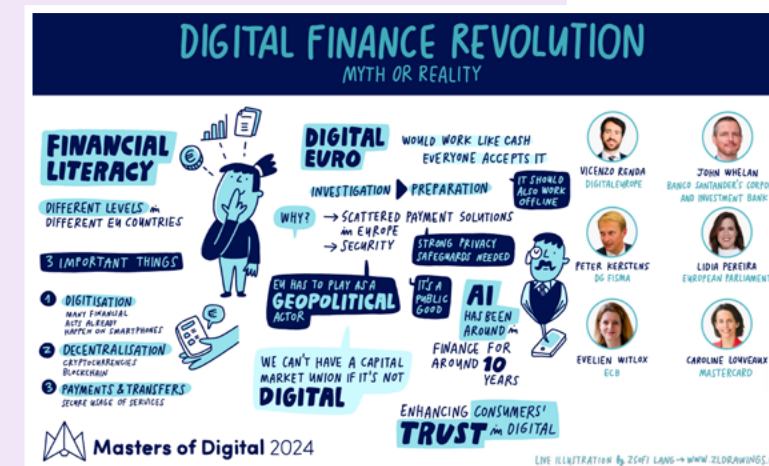


# Digital finance revolution – myth or reality



This panel tackled the evolving landscape of digital finance, addressing crucial questions surrounding the EU's role in financial innovation, the impact of digital trends on citizens and the challenges and opportunities presented by digital currencies like the Digital Euro.

The discussion will explore regulatory hurdles within the Single Market and strategies to garner public support for groundbreaking financial technologies.



## Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Peter Kerstens** Advisor, DG FISMA, European Commission

"I believe we will not have a Capital Market Union if it is not digital."

**Lúcia Pereira** MEP:

Financial literacy plays a key role for competitiveness in Europe. It can be a barrier to risk taking and innovation.

**Evelien Witlox** Programme Manager, Digital Euro, ECB:

The Rule book defines specifications that digital euro would work like cash, but we need to work with the stakeholders to standardize something.

**John Whelan** Managing Director of Crypto and Digital Assets, Banco Santander:

"European legislation needs to be reviewed to be fit for purpose every three years. CDSR is an example."

**Caroline Louveaux** EVP and Chief Privacy Officer, Mastercard:

"AI is not new to the financial sector. It helps with fraud preventions, from anti money laundering, and prevents from cybersecurity risks."



# Future of Connectivity

EU has set ambitious targets within the Digital Decade framework such as gigabit connectivity for everyone among others. This also is in line with the KPI's set by the DIGITALEUROPE's manifesto, that we need to ensure by 2030 a gigabit connectivity and 5G mobile coverage for everyone.

Pairing that with the not so stellar performance of Europe when it comes to the roll-out of wired and wireless solutions. Also, the investments in the R&D of the next-generation connectivity, most prominently 6G, could use a boost as well. In order to tackle the situation, a new legislative package is expected from the European Commission.

This panel took us on an exploration of what needs to be done to realise the Digital Decade targets from both the industry and the legislative side.

## Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Rolf Werner** Head of Market Europe, Nokia:

You need 5G by definition for certain applications. Same is true for 6G. It needs to be prepared now. We need to be innovative and bring it into play: then people will invest.

**Christian Leon** Head of France, Belgium and North Africa, Ericsson:

Every country comes with different timelines, ambitions, and constraints, leading to lack of scale on the EU market. The two key ingredients for 4G and 5G are how to keep the standards globally so we have an economy of scale behind it; and how can we have spectrum harmonization on EU level?

**Peter Weckesser** Chief Digital Officer, Schneider Electric:

One reason the speed in industry 5G lags is that for the most part, connectivity in industrial applications is wired. There is a huge opportunity for Europe.



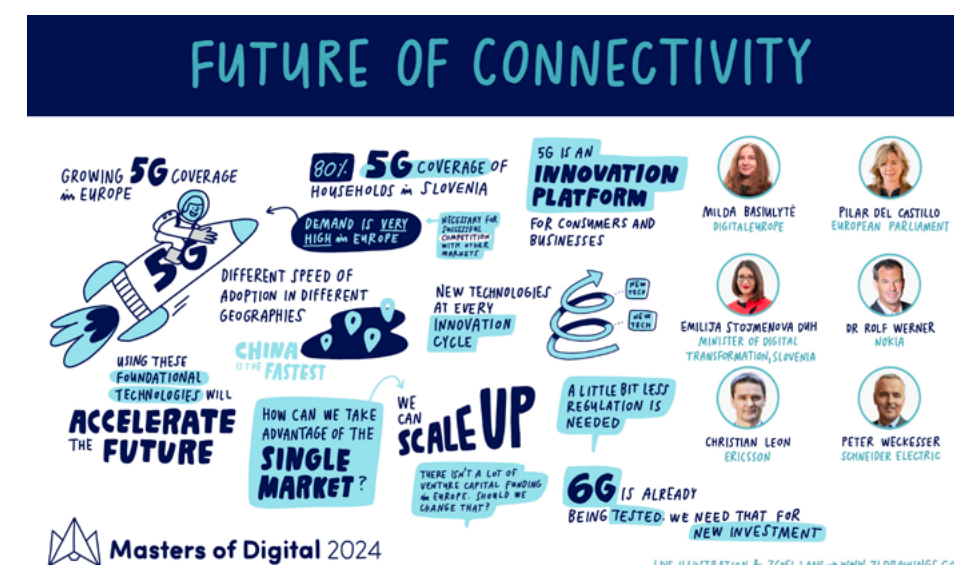
"I would encourage everyone in business to use the foundational technologies of high-bandwidth very reliable real-time wireless communications."

**Pilar del Castillo** MEP:

The Single Market is absolutely indispensable. Without it, companies cannot scale up. We do not use the possibilities to lead globally. Therefore, we need networks.

**Emilija Stojmenova Duh** Minister of Digital Transformation, Slovenia:

I am optimistic about 6G. In Europe we are generally pessimistic – I believe we can be leaders.





# Data, Diagnosis, Delivery: Europe's Path to a Smart, Sustainable and Accessible Healthcare Future

The structural problems of the European healthcare system were widely exposed by the COVID pandemic, plus member states are increasingly challenged with aging populations, the rise of chronic diseases, and financial constraints. Digital health can help overcome those challenges.

Therefore, the panelists zoomed into the huge potential of technology in making our healthcare systems more digital, sustainable, and accessible

## Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Marco Marsella** Director C "Digital, EU4Health and Health systems modernisation, European Commission

"We need to master how new innovations will change patient-doctor relations".

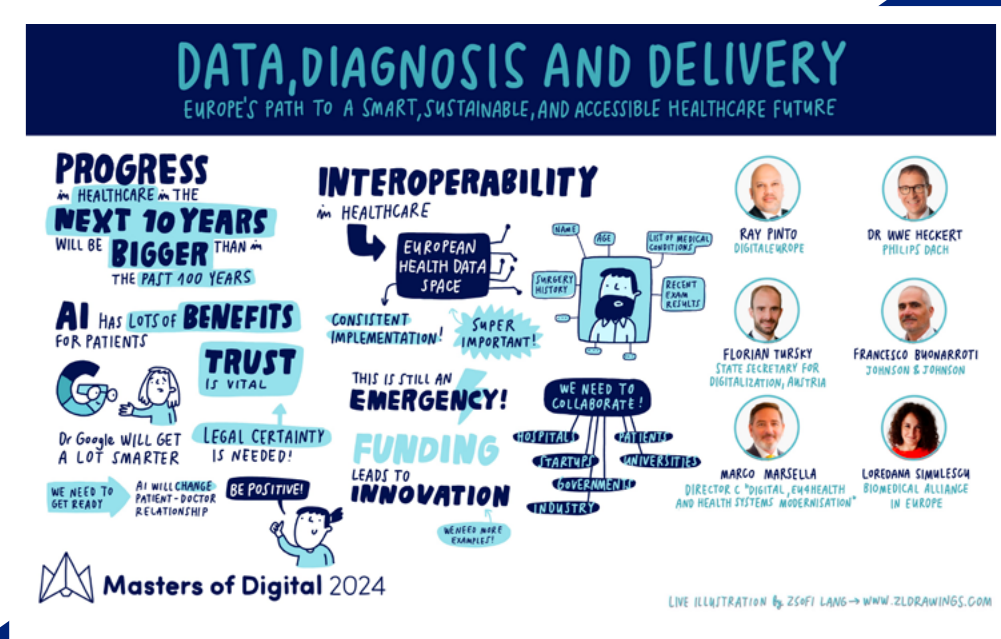
**Florian Tursky** State Secretary for Digitalisation, Austria

"Our health data has to be as user-friendly as the newest dating app"

**Francesco Buonarroti** VP Head of Technology Innovative Medicines EMEA, Johnson & Johnson:

We need to ensure that Europe is an attractive place for investment, enable opportunities to patients and not hamper these opportunities with regulation.

**Dr. Uwe Heckert** Head of Enterprise Informatics Europe & Managing Director Philips DACH Strategic partnerships are vital as no one will be able to make progress alone, that's why we need to collaborate with start-ups and help to get them out of the regulation jungle.





# Energy Gets Smart: Digitising the Grid for the Twin Transition

The digital modernisation of our energy grids is crucial to master the 'Twin Transition' and transform our continent into a frontrunner for climate protection and technological innovation.

This panel delved deep into the essential role of digital technology in revamping our energy grids as well as how tech solutions can make us more sustainable, connected, and resilient.

## Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Vincent Berrutto** Head of Innovation and Research, DG ENERGY, European Commission:

We need the digitalisation of the energy grid as the EU is moving towards a decentralised, decarbonised system as a whole.

**Maria da Graça Carvalho** Member of the European Parliament:

The effects of Russia's aggression in Ukraine on our energy market would have been less pronounced in a digitalised energy market.



**Pablo Hevia Koch** Head of Renewables Integration and Security of Electricity, IEA:

"The key word is flexibility to modify the demand and generation of energy. This goes from forecasting demand, improving grids and finding new energy storage methods."

**Jake Oster** AWS Head of Energy and Environment, EMEA, Amazon:

"With variable energy sources, a certain flexibility is needed, which can only be achieved by implementing a digital backbone"

And to round it up, moderator Robert Hodgson from Euronews concluded: "In 2022, wind and solar power comprised 22% of the market. Now, to effectively monitor the power grid and manage the surplus amount, we need to digitalise it".





# Fireside chat: Trans-Atlantic digital cooperation and challenges for the period 2024-2029

Even though the Von der Leyen Commission has been confronted by an unprecedented set of global challenges in recent years, in collaboration with like-minded partners the 'Geopolitical Commission' has nevertheless achieved lasting success.

Looking ahead into the upcoming years, this Fireside Chat, explored challenges for the EU to act on the global stage.

## Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl** Director-General, DIGITALEUROPE:

"The latest is the European Economic Security Strategy, a strategy to promote, protect and partner. But what is still missing is the 4th P – namely public-private partnerships."

Even though the European Economic Security Strategy and Economic Security package publication emphasises the four critical technologies – AI, Advanced Semiconductor, Quantum and Biotechnology – only few EU companies lead in those technologies.

**Valdis Dombrovskis** Executive Vice-President and European Commissioner for Trade:

"Our transatlantic partnership with the US is the largest and most important partnership in the world".

Economic Security should not be a pretext for protectionism, then the EU thrives due to global openness.

"The TTC is a very valuable platform for cooperation, for coordination approaches, discussing differences, building trust, and finding the way forward"

The priorities of the new mandate need to be on competitiveness, as the productive growth is falling behind the US and China and we are facing population aging, high energy prices as well as the green and digital transformation.





# AI made in Europe

In 2023, Artificial Intelligence (AI) became a central topic of global conversation, significantly influencing public debates and international politics. The European Union took a pioneering step by introducing the world's first AI Act, aimed at mitigating the risks posed by AI technology.

This panel discussion delved into strategies for advancing AI uptake in the EU and how to forge global cooperation for establishing common AI standards.

## Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Emilija Stojmenova Duh** Minister of Digital Transformation Slovenia:

"AI shouldn't be isolated from the overall digital transformation of Europe"

**Dimitris Papastergiou** Minister of Digital Governance, Greece:

"Why do we need AI? Because it can provide better communities and better democracies. It can, for example, help against misinformation"

At the end of the sessions, our Director-General revealed the Master of Digital Award 2024 winner, Roberto Viola.

**Dragoș Tudorache** MEP, Co-Rapporteur for the AI Act:

The AI Act is not a barrier to innovation but rather will help to foster generative AI, hence AI made in Europe is possible.

**Roberto Viola** Director-General, DG CNECT, European Commission:

We will deliver an innovation package with two pillars, including AI factories to upgrade our supercomputer infrastructure, quality data, data centres, SMEs, and large companies as well as expanding the use of AI on several verticals.

**Julie Linn Teigland** EMEA Area Managing Partner, EY:

AI will eventually impact every single job and change its focus. That's why we need capital to invest in projects and start-ups as well in the EU market overall, good consistency in the regulations to grow strong companies, and a united Single Market with one rule and not 27.

**Peter Weckesser** Chief Digital Officer, Schneider Electric:

"AI will be as disruptive as the internet 30 years ago, regardless of the industry."





# Master of Digital Award

In 2023, Artificial Intelligence (AI) became a central topic of global conversation, significantly influencing public debates and international politics.

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This panel discussion delved into strategies for advancing AI uptake in the EU and how to forge global cooperation for establishing common AI standards.





# Securing Europe's Future: Cybersecurity in an Era of Geopolitical Instability

With global annual costs of cybercrime reaching trillions of Euros and cyber-attacks in the EU doubling within months, cybersecurity remains indispensable to the EU's digital transformation.

## Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Katarzyna Prusak-Gorniak** Head of Digital Affairs Unit, Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU/Deputy Chairperson of the GB European Cybersecurity Conference:

We have a very strong belief that Europe will have a strong role to impact and boost the cybersecurity industry and also strengthen the links between academia and industry.

**Morten Lokkegaard** Member of the European Parliament:

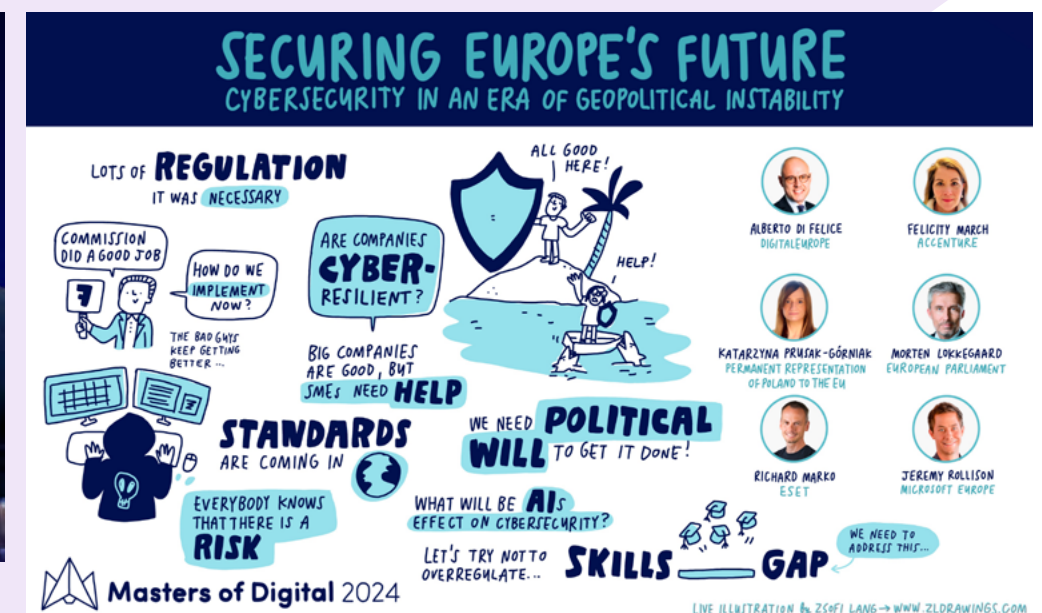
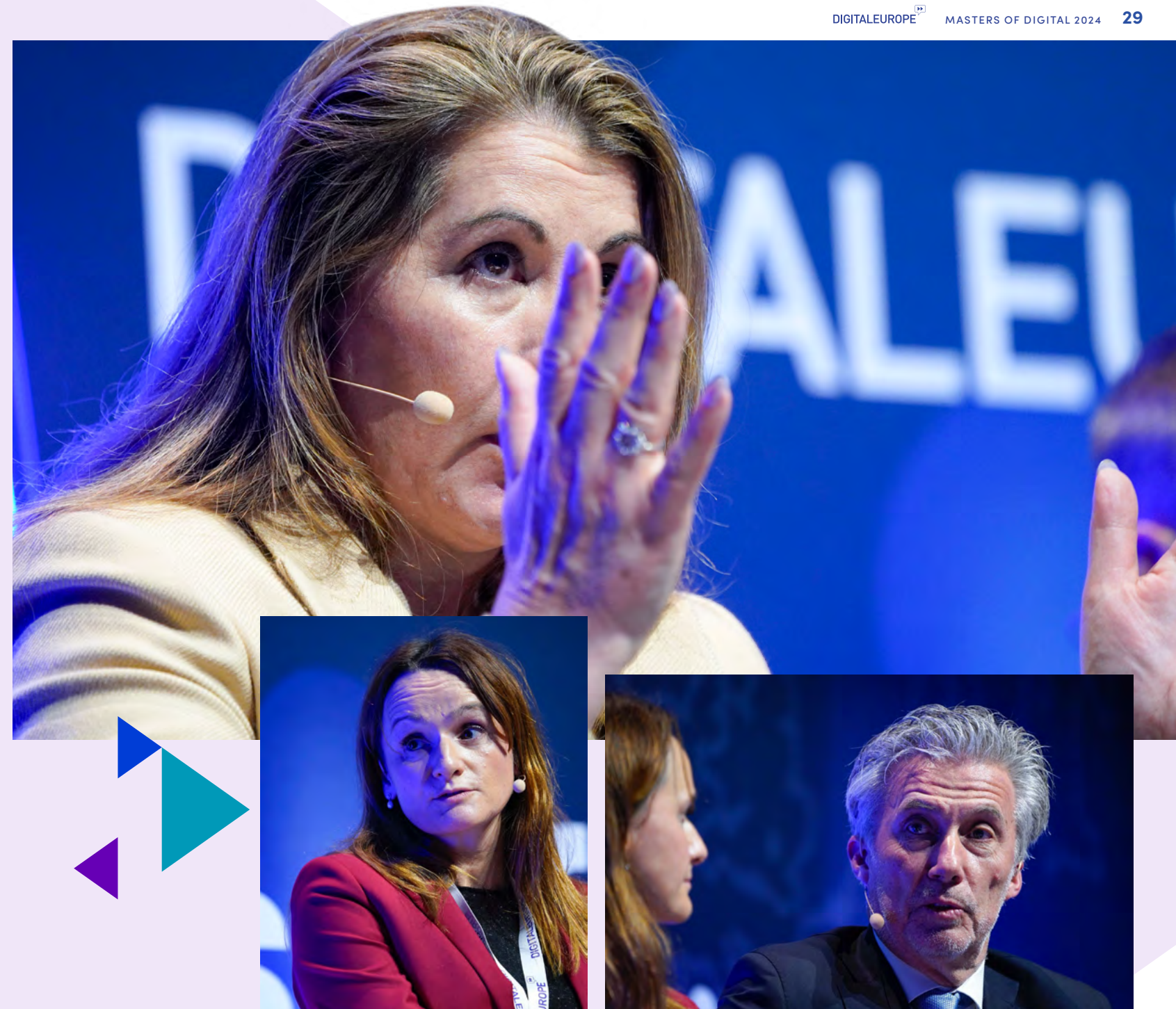
"Cyberdefence is so important, politically speaking, that this urgency will force things to move faster, and it will be there before we know it".

**Felicity March** EMEA Cyber Strategy Lead & Global Cyber C-suite and Board Lead, Accenture:

Technology is growing very fast, and AI is going to be essential for our cyber defence capabilities. That's why we're advocating for true cyber resilience across the entire ecosystem.

**Jeremy Rollison** Head of EU Policy, European Government Affairs, Microsoft Europe:

"We all recognise the challenges that need to be addressed in the shortage of cybersecurity skills. It is also an economic question: These are the jobs of the future".





# How to build a Unicorn

At the heart of every ambitious startup lies the dream of achieving unicorn status—a valuation of over \$1 billion. The journey from a promising startup to a unicorn in Europe is loaded with several challenges from raising capital to navigating complex regulation in a fragmented European market.

Together with CEOs from European scale-ups, this panel tackled the challenges faced, lessons learned, and pivotal decisions that propelled their companies toward growth.

## Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Hillary Mine** President, DIGITALEUROPE:

“Because we are so successful, we might have gotten too comfortable”

**Indrek Heinloo** Vice President, Government Affairs, Veriff

“Fragmentation in Europe is a symptom”

**Cybèle Rolland** COO, Aerospacelab

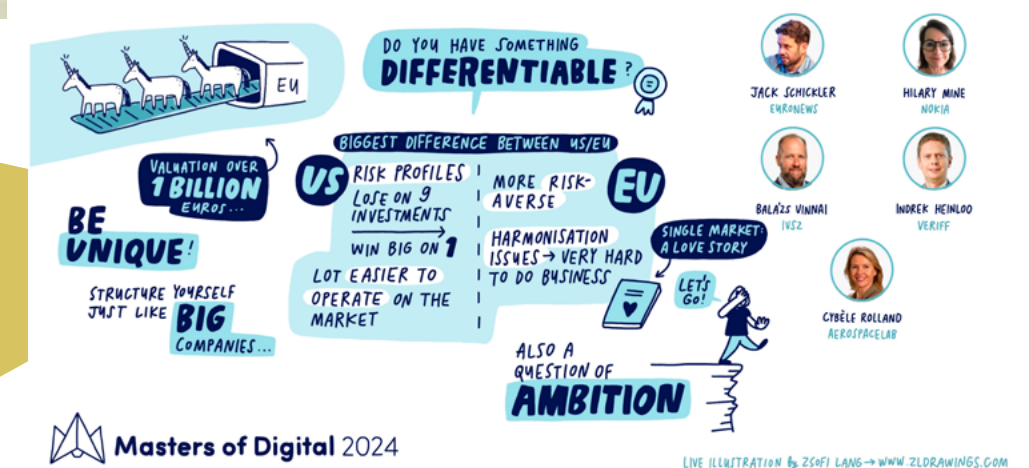
The valuation of a company is important, however, it is important to give unicorns the mindset that they can compete with the big companies from day one.

**Balázs Vinnai** President, IVSZ

The fear of failing blocks the capabilities of big stories.



## HOW TO BUILD A UNICORN





# Future Unicorn Award Ceremony – Opening keynote

The Future Unicorn Award wants to celebrate scale-ups from across Europe with the potential of becoming future European tech giants. For seven years now, the winner has been announced at Masters of Digital.

Before revealing the next European tech unicorn of this year's Future Unicorn Award 2024, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Iliana Ivanova took the stage and pitched the Commission's strategy for making the EU a Unicorn Powerhouse.

## Notes from the speech:

"Congrats to the nominees for nurturing the seeds of creativity".

We need to double the number of unicorns by 2030, then our continent has some ambitious start-ups and scale-ups.

The goal must be to let ambitious innovators succeed and give favourable conditions for companies to make them stay in Europe.

By championing business and fostering an ecosystem that encourages their success we reinforce Europe's position as leading in the digital landscape.

The Future Unicorn Award is the witness of innovation in Europe.





# Future Unicorn Award nominees

The opening remarks of Commissioner Ivanova were followed by a panel with all three finalists of this year's Future Unicorn Award 2024 on their unique business strategies as well as still existing barriers for scaling up in the EU.

## Key takeaways from the panelists:

**Marta Garcia** Chief Financial Officer, Multiverse Computing:

"We are the largest quantum and quantum-inspired company in Europe, we want quantum computing for everyone – not just experts"

Fundraising resources are key, as the EU falls behind in the USA, which is why the EU needs to be bold and take risks.

**Henrik Teisbaek** Chief Executive Officer, Veo Technologies:

"Technology and sports have only been possible for a few teams and our goal is to amplify the positive effect sport has in the world by opening up that access".

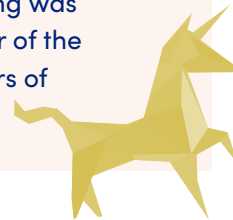
The EU has great talent, but it is difficult to do business in Europe. But it is also an advantage, because when you build a company out of a small country you are forced to think locally.

**Cybele Rolland** Chief Operation Officer, Aerospacelab:

"We have developed everything inside a satellite, we understand every piece and we have mastered the supply chain"

Space is essential for sovereignty, and while each country tries to protect their own champion we need to work together to build a pan-European space sovereignty.

Eventually, Multiverse Computing was announced as this year's winner of the Future Unicorn Award at Masters of Digital 2024.







## Closing Remarks

Wrapping up, our Director-General Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl looked ahead into what the EU needs to focus on in the years ahead to eventually become a Digital Powerhouse by 2030.

Companies should be in love with each other and with the single market. For that, three Ss are the key. Scale, speed, solidarity.

Three Ss go hand in hand with three Cs:  
Competence, common market, capabilities

The event was concluded with a cordial cocktail reception generously sponsored by one of our corporate members, Schneider Electric.





# VIP Breakfast and Lunch

We gathered around 15 guests to a VIP breakfast at the Albert Restaurant at the Royal Library of Belgium for a roundtable discussion on artificial intelligence.

Speakers and VIP guests from the event joined us for lunch at the Albert Restaurant during the lunch break of the main conference.





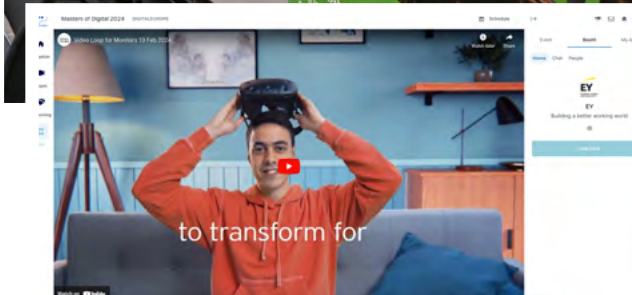
# VIP Dinner

The VIP dinner took place the evening before the main event on 20 February at the BELvue Museum. We welcomed over 80 high level guests. Speakers included Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl, Nanna-Louise Linde (Microsoft) and Damian Boeselager (MEP)





# In-Person and Virtual Exhibitions



# MoD Online





# Sponsors

This year's event was graciously sponsored by:



Media partner



# 2025 Sponsorship Opportunities

	€50,000	€35,000	€20,000
Benefits	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Named as a sponsor (at selected level) with logo on relevant event materials	✓	✓	✓
Guaranteed and complimentary delegate places at the on-site element (due to venue capacity restrictions) in addition to your speaker (if applicable)	3	2	1
Place at exclusive VIP additional events (dinner, lunch etc. where organised)	2	1	1
Opportunity to have an exhibition booth at the venue - <i>to ensure maximum impact we ask that this is a hands on and exciting experience for attendees. DIGITALEUROPE are to sign off on all booths to guarantee audience satisfaction</i>	✓		
Guaranteed speaking slot - <i>session choice to be discussed and agreed with DIGITALEUROPE, stage dependent on registrations and room capacities</i>	✓	✓	✓ <small>Second Stage</small>
Opportunity to help shape the chosen session your company representative will be participating in, including audience polls	✓		
Opportunity to host video content or documents online for the virtual audience	✓	✓	
Video interview opportunity with your speaker - with a clip included in the event highlights video, and a full interview edited into a standalone video (filmed at event)	✓		
Access to booking private meeting rooms for bilateral meetings on site and assistance with coordinating meetings with other event speakers and VIPs	✓	✓	



# About DIGITALEUROPE

DIGITALEUROPE is the leading trade association representing digitally transforming industries in Europe.

We stand for a regulatory environment that enables European businesses and citizens to prosper from digital technologies. We wish Europe to grow, attract and sustain the world's best digital talents and technology companies.

Together with our members, we shape the industry policy positions on all relevant legislative matters and contribute to the development and implementation of relevant EU policies. Our membership represents over 45,000 businesses who operate and invest in Europe. It includes 109 corporations which are global leaders in their field of activity, as well as 41 national trade associations from across Europe.

## Our Mission

As leaders of digital industries, we engage with policymakers and citizens to shape a more secure and competitive business environment for a stronger digital Europe.

## Our Vision

We strive for a Europe leading on digital for its people, its businesses, and the climate.

## About Masters of Digital

Masters of Digital is our annual flagship summit and Europe's largest digital policy conference. Every February, we bring together top EU policymakers, digital industry leaders, and representatives from academia and civil society to shape the EU digital policy agenda for the year to come. Masters of Digital has seen the participation of European Presidents and Commissioners, Members of the European Parliament, national ministers and C-suite representatives of the largest digital businesses in Europe and beyond.

Now in its eighth year, and under the theme "Europe 2030: A Digital Powerhouse", Masters of Digital delved into the profound impact of AI and emerging technologies on Europe's economy, society, and sustainability. The conference explored the transformative potential of digital innovation in fostering economic growth, driving





# #MOD2024

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