Future 500 forum set to launch Europe's next generation of global champions

Bled, Slovenia, August 21, 2025 – **On September 1, 2025, the Future 500 Forum will debut at the IEDC – Bled School of Management, convening top European policymakers, investors, unicorn founders, and innovators to kick off a long-term mission: scaling Europe's most promising companies into global leaders.**

Co-led by the Atlantic Council and IEDC – Bled School of Management, and launched in collaboration with the Bled Strategic Forum, Podim, as the proud Startup Ecosystem Partner, and ISR – Institute for Strategic Solutions, the Future 500 initiative will identify and accelerate 500 high-potential scale-ups from Central, Eastern, Southeastern Europe and the broader EU — bridging the gap between bold entrepreneurial talent and the capital, partners, and policies they need to grow.

A timely response to Europe's scale-up challenge

Europe faces mounting pressure to remain competitive amid rapid technological and business-model shifts worldwide. Future 500 aims to spotlight and support emerging champions from the region, embedding them into policy discussions, raising their global visibility, and providing access to strategic growth capital.

The launch event will feature high level discussions between visionary entrepreneurs, European Commissioners, prime ministers, finance ministers, and top tier investors. It will unveil the first cohort of Europe's scale up leaders and set the stage for a long term initiative that bridges business, capital, and policy.

Building bridges between innovation, investment, and policy

Confirmed speakers include **Jozef Síkela**, European Commissioner for International Partnerships; **Edi Rama**, Prime Minister of Albania; **Mariya Gabriel**, President of the Robert Schuman Foundation and former EU Commissioner for Innovation; **Rafał Brzoska**, founder of InPost; **Mark Pleško**, founder of Cosylab; **Branko Milutinović**, founder of Nordeus; and other top entrepreneurs, policymakers, and investors.

"Future 500 initiative is a long-overdue wake-up call. It's about unleashing the potential of brilliant founders from Krakow, Sofia, Vodnjan, Beograd, Ljubljana, or Cluj, helping them stop being hidden champions and start becoming global players. We're here to back them with capital, visibility, and transatlantic muscle and to remind Europe that the future belongs to those who build it," said **Stjepan Orešković**, Chair of IEDC's Supervisory Board, founder of BOSQAR d.d. (BOSQAR INVEST), and founder of Future 500.

"As part of our new SEEUS initiative—"Southeast Europe United for Success," driven in partnership with the IEDC Bled School of Management—the Future 500 is built on a simple but pressing idea: Europe already has the talent to lead globally; what it lacks is scale. What we see in Central and Southeast Europe is a region full of untapped potential, with entrepreneurs and high-growth ventures building transformative companies with the potential to reshape fields like technology, AI, sustainability, and manufacturing. Yet too many are forced to look abroad for growth capital or recognition. With the Future 500 Forum, we're connecting these change-makers from the SEE entrepreneurial ecosystem directly to Europe's policymakers, investors, and transatlantic partners, ensuring their work gets recognized as a strategic opportunity for Europe and paving the way for real, lasting impact across the whole region," emphasized **Jörn Fleck**, Senior Director at the Atlantic Council's Europe Center.

For more information about the event and the Future 500 platform, visit www.future500forum.com.