



HANNS MARTIN

SCHLEYER-STIFTUNG

FREIHEIT • DEMOKRATIE • SOZIALE MARKTWIRTSCHAFT



Heinz Nixdorf Stiftung

BERLIN CONGRESS

28th – 29th October 2026

About the Congress

Profound upheavals, triggered by geo-economic and geopolitical shifts in power and such technological developments as the growing importance of artificial intelligence, are presenting Europe with challenges and necessitating structural change in the continent's economy, government and society as a whole. Among the most urgent issues is the erosion of our rules-based order, which will have consequences not only for our institutions but also, by impacting trade and the security of raw material and energy supplies, for the entire economy. We also face challenges to our security and defence policy. The year 2026 is forcing Europe to take a new stand, while at the same time offering the Old World the opportunity to reassert itself as a sovereign actor and a strong economic partner.

The XII International Congress 'Young Social Science and Economics', organised in cooperation with the Heinz Nixdorf Foundation, brings together academic researchers and leading figures from business, politics and civil society. The target participants are young social scientists from across Europe who have been put forward by their university departments. In working groups, these early-career researchers will present the insights they have gleaned from the idea forges of their universities and debate them on an equal footing with high level decision-makers from the business world, leading academics, well-known journalists and politicians. Personal encounters between these sessions will also enable them to forge important contacts for their later careers.

With this format, the Congress aims not only to throw up fresh ideas on how Europe can continue to flourish as a region of prosperity, individual freedom and, in its unity, a significant peace project, but also to identify the legal, political and economic frameworks which will be necessary to achieve this.

In total, more than 300 guests from academia, business, policymaking and the media are expected to attend this international conference and its proceedings will subsequently be made available in a separate publication.

We look forward to welcoming you to Berlin.

We have pleasure in inviting you to attend our XII International Congress on
“Young Social Science and Economics”
organised by the Hanns Martin Schleyer Foundation and the
Heinz Nixdorf Foundation in collaboration with the ifo Institute in Munich,
ESMT Berlin and the University of Freiburg

Rethinking Europe – New Ideas for an Innovative,
Attractive and Secure Europe

28th – 29th October 2026
Allianz Forum, Berlin

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Clemens Fuest
President of the ifo Institute
Leibniz Institute for Economic Research
at the University of Munich

Prof. Jörg Rocholl, Ph.D.
President European School of Former
Management and Technology Berlin

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Andreas Voßkuhle
President of the Federal Constitutional Court
Chair of Political Science
Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg

Britta Seeger
Chair of the Executive Board
Hanns Martin Schleyer Foundation
Member of the Board of Management
Mercedes Benz Group AG

Barbara Frenz
Member of the Executive Board
Hanns Martin Schleyer Foundation

Prof. Dr. Nikolaus Risch
Deputy Chairman of the Executive Board
Heinz Nixdorf Foundation

Wednesday, 28th October 2026

12.45 p.m.

Word of Welcome

Barbara Frenz

Opening Address

Prof. Dr Dr h.c. Clemens Fuest, Prof. Jörg Rocholl, Ph.D., Prof. Dr Dr h.c. mult. Andreas Voßkuhle

[Rethinking Europe – New Ideas for an Innovative, Attractive and Secure Europe](#)

Keynote Speech

Franziska Hoppermann, Member of the Bundestag,

Secretary-General of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, Berlin

Keynote Speech

Senator Prof. Dr Dr h.c. Adam Bodnar, LL.M., Institute of Law, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw; former Minister of Justice and Prosecutor General of the Republic of Poland

Panel discussion

Senator Prof. Dr Dr h.c. Adam Bodnar, LL.M.

Prof. Dr Christian Calliess, LL.M. Eur., Professor of Public Law, specialising in environmental law and European law, Free University of Berlin

Dr Chris Rehse, Founder and Managing Director, SANBER Health, Berlin

Dr Jochen Weyrauch, Chairman of the Executive Board, Dürr AG, Bietigheim-Bissingen

Dr Sabine Weyand, Hors Classe Adviser for European Strategic Partnerships, Secretariat-General, European Commission, Brussels

Chair: Dr Marc Beise, freelance journalist and author,

former Italian correspondent and head of the business desk at the Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich

3.30 p.m.

Coffee break

4.00 p.m.

Working groups

7.30 p.m.

Presentation of the 2025/2026 Friedwart Bruckhaus Prizes on the topic

[Undesirable Trends in the Housing Market – The Market or the State is Failing?](#)

Working Group 1

Facilitating Innovation in Europe in the Age of AI: Regulation, Scaling and Sovereignty

Chair: Prof. Dr Susanne Leist, Professor of Business Informatics, University of Regensburg

Co-Chair (Practice): Dr Michael Dose, Senior Advisor on Innovation, Security and Technology,
BDI – Federation of German Industries, Berlin

Co-Chair (Media): Dr Marc Beise

Speakers: [Digital by Default: Can Digitalisation Make the Legal System Resilient and Europe More Competitive and Attractive for Investment?](#)
Charlotte Hedwig Beutler, LL.B., Research Assistant, Chair of German and European Consumer Law, Private Law and Comparative Law, University of Bayreuth

[Collaboration on Data to Support SMEs in the AI Economy – A Proposed Solution for Cross-institutional Government Support for Innovation](#)
Jun.-Prof. Dr Jan-Frederick Göhsl, LL.M., Assistant Professor of Civil Law, Commercial Law and Digitalisation, University of Münster

[Europe's Economic and Innovative Dynamism in the Age of AI](#)
Kaspar Lichtsteiner, M.Sc., PhD candidate, D-MTEC doctoral programme, KOF Institute, Department of Innovation Economics, ETH Zurich

[Legal Dynamics in the Governance of Quantum Innovation Value Chains](#)
Anh Nguyen, LL.M., PhD Researcher, Institute for Information Law, University of Amsterdam

[Making Pricing Power Visible: NLP and AI-supported Indicators as a Contribution to Europe's Competitiveness and Innovation Capacity](#)
André Tomano, M.Sc., Department of Marketing & Supply-Chain Management /
Department of Finance, School of Business and Economics, Maastricht University

Working Group 2

Europe's Capital Markets in International Competition

- Chair: Prof. Dr Alexandra Niessen-Ruenzi,
Chair of General Business Administration and Corporate Governance, University of Mannheim
- Co-Chair (Practice): Dr Alexandra Hachmeister, Head of the Digital Euro Division, Deutsche Bundesbank, Frankfurt am Main
- Co-Chair (Media): Julia Leonhardt, Finance & Real Estate Editor, Wirtschaftswoche, Düsseldorf
- Speakers: [Implicit Liabilities, Explicit Risks: On the Social Architecture of the European Capital Markets Union](#)
Dr Vanessa Endrejat, Max Weber Postdoctoral Fellow,
Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute, Florence
- [Fragmentation Versus Integration: Does Europe Need a Central Capital Markets Regulator?](#)
Dr Emanuel Falch, University Assistant, Institute for Public Law,
Political Science and Public Administration, University of Innsbruck
- [European Monetary Sovereignty in Payment Transactions: Cash and the Digital Euro as Public Infrastructure in the Competition between Payment Systems](#)
Fabio Knümann, M.Sc., Doctoral Researcher, Düsseldorf Institute for Competition Economics,
Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf
- [Digital Transformation in the European Legal Community: The Digital Euro as a Test of Progress](#)
Clara Schneidenbach, LL.M., Research Assistant, Chair of German and International Commercial Law,
Leipzig University of Applied Sciences

Working Group 3

Beyond the Rules-based Order: Trade and Economic Competition amid Geopolitical Uncertainty

Chair: Prof. Dr Jan Schnellenbach, Professor of Economics, specialising in microeconomics, Brandenburg University of Technology, Cottbus-Senftenberg

Co-Chair (Practice): Dr Sabine Weyand

Co-Chair (Media): Tobias Blanken, Editor, Freedom of Expression Desk, Die Welt, Berlin

Speakers: **Foreign Policy and Company Law: Geopolitical Conflicts between Norms and European Regulatory Strategy**

Dr Nina Benz, Research Fellow / Professorial Candidate, Institute for German and European Company and Commercial Law, University of Heidelberg

Friend or Foe? Balancing Security and Sustainability in New EU Trade Agreements

Kathleen Evers, LL.M., Research Assistant, Chair of Public Law and International Law, specialising in sustainability, Leuphana University of Lüneburg

Strategic Goods in EU Trade Policy: The Case of Steel

Dr Philipp Reinhold, Senior Lecturer (on secondment), Chair of Public Law, International Law, European Law and International Commercial Law, Europa Institute, Saarland University, Saarbrücken

Competition, Innovation and Strategic Sovereignty: The Role of European Competition Policy in the Age of AI

Dr Annika Stöhr, Research Fellow / Professorial Candidate, Department of Economic Theory, Ilmenau University of Technology

Do Handshakes Move Markets? Economic Diplomacy and Bilateral Economic Relations in Europe

Patricia Surray, M.Sc., Research Assistant / PhD Candidate, Chair of Urban, Regional and International Economic Relations, Technical University of Dortmund

Working Group 4*

Europe's Security and Resilience After the Change of Direction in its Defence Policy

- Chair: Prof. Dr Matthias Ruffert, Chair of Public Law and European Law, Humboldt University of Berlin
- Co-Chair (Practice): Dr Rainer Kambeck, Head of the Economic and Financial Policy and SMEs Division, German Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Berlin
- Co-Chair (Media): Dr Werner Mussler, Business Correspondent for Austria, Central and South-Eastern Europe and Turkey, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Vienna
- Speakers:
- [The United States of Europe Project: Planning as a Form of Action in the New European Industrial Policy](#)
Dr Eva Herzog, Research Fellow / Postdoctoral Researcher, Chair of Public Law and the Foundations of Law, Humboldt University of Berlin
- [The Need for Acceleration in the Raw Materials Sector](#)
Dr Chiara Kemnitz, Research Fellow, Department of Spatial Planning and Environmental Law, Dortmund Technical University
- [From Digital Colonialism to Europe's Digital Sovereignty](#)
Dr Martin Meier, Research Fellow / Postdoctoral Researcher, Chair of Public Law, in particular Public Economic Law, Friedrich Schiller University of Jena
- [Europe's Geopolitical Coming of Age in the Light of Historical Institutionalism](#)
Simon Tafler, M.A., Research Assistant / PhD Candidate, Chair of Comparative Political Science, specialising in Central and Eastern Europe in the EU, Andr ssy University, Budapest
- [Rethinking Geopolitical Europe: Security in an Era of Global Power Shifts](#)
Gesine Weber, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Centre for Security Studies, ETH Zurich

*Simultaneous German–English translation is available

Working Group 5

Enlargement and Reform of the European Union: Ways to safeguard Europe's Ability to Act

- Chair: Prof. Dr Christian Calliess, LL.M., Director, Institute for Public Law, Chair of Public Law, Environmental and European Law, Free University of Berlin
- Co-Chair (Practice): Arne Franke, Managing Director / Head of the EU, International Affairs and Economic Affairs Department, BDA – Confederation of German Employers' Associations, Berlin
- Co-Chair (Media): Heike Göbel, freelance journalist and presenter; former Editor-in-Charge of Economic Policy, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurt am Main
- Speakers:
- [Power Shifts in Global Digital Governance: Europe's Chance to Shape the Digital Future?](#)
Nadia El Ghali, M.A., Research Fellow, Chair of Global Governance and Public Policy, Geschwister Scholl Institute for Political Science, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich
- [Due Diligence as an Emerging Governance Mechanism in EU Law](#)
Dr Anna-Julia Saiger, LL.M., Assistant Lecturer (on secondment), University of Freiburg
- [Taking Action: Maintaining Strategic Capacity for Action through Effective Institutions](#)
Christoph Schranz, LL.M., University Assistant / PhD Candidate, Institute for the Theory and Future of Law, Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck
- [Values, Institutions and Capacity for Action in the Enlarged EU: Evolutionary Structural Change rather than Formal Treaty Reform](#)
Dr Luke Dimitrios Spieker, Postdoctoral Researcher / Research Fellow, DFG Research Training Group DynamInt, Humboldt University of Berlin
- [Making Decision-Making Processes More Flexible in an Expanding Union – With and Without Treaty Amendments](#)
PD Dr Ferdinand Weber, Institute for International and European Law, Georg-August University of Göttingen

Working Group 6

Populism, Polarisation and European Values: Europe as an Opportunity when the Rule of Law and Civil Liberties are under Threat

Chair: Prof. Dr Nils Goldschmidt, Director of the Global Ethos Institute – an affiliated institute of the Global Ethos Foundation at the University of Tübingen

Co-Chair (Practice): Prof. Dr Dr h.c. mult. Andreas Voßkuhle

Co-Chair (Media): Dr Ursula Weidenfeld, business journalist, Berlin

Speakers: [When the Elon Musks of this World Have a Say: What Can Be Done to Counter External Influence? A Critical Analysis of So-called 'Foreign Agent Laws'](#)

Dr Marie Beyrich, Lecturer / Postdoctoral Researcher, Chair of Public Law and Politics, specialising in European, international and comparative law, University of Regensburg

[The Illusion of a Divided Society: The Role of Business and Politics during the Crisis of Democracy](#)

Karoline R. Estermann, M.A., PhD candidate, Junior Research Group "Comparative Survey", SCRIPTS – Cluster of Excellence, Otto Suhr Institute for Political Science, Free University of Berlin

[Those Who Declare Their Allegiance Judge More Harshly – But Don't Act Any Differently: The Role of Subjective Party Affiliation in Attitude- and Behaviour-related Affective Polarisation in 25 European Democracies](#)

Tristan Muno, M.A., Research Assistant, Chair of Political Science, European Politics, University of Mannheim

[Now Tell Me, What's Your Take on International Law? On the Role of Fundamental International Legal Norms \(e.g. the Ban on Force, International Humanitarian Law\) in EU Foreign Policy](#)

Dr Michael Riepl, LL.M., Post-doctoral Researcher / Professorial Candidate, Academy for the Protection of European Human Rights, University of Cologne

[L'Union Oblige. European Institutions' Obligation to Apply European Values](#)

Dominik Schwab, LL.M., Research Fellow, Institute for Politics and Public Law, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

Thursday, 29th October 2026

- 9.00 a.m. Chaired roundtable discussion with journalists on the theme of the Congress, incorporating the ideas of the young researchers from the working groups:
Dr Marc Beise, Tobias Blanken, Heike Göbel, Julia Leonhardt, Dr Werner Mussler, Dr Ursula Weidenfeld
- 10.30 a.m. Coffee break
- Germany as the Driving Force behind a Strong Europe? On the Future of Europe in a New Geostrategic Context
- 11.00 a.m. **Keynote Speech**
Can Europe Defend Itself?
Ambassador Prof. Dr h.c. Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman of the Munich Security Conference
- 11.30 a.m. **Panel discussion**
Jörg Burzer, Member of the Executive Board, responsible for Development & Purchasing / Chief Technology Officer, Mercedes-Benz Group AG, Stuttgart
Sylvie Goulard, President of the Franco-German Institute, Ludwigsburg,
 former Minister of Defence of the French Republic,
Prof. Dr Peter R. Neumann, Professor of Security Studies, Department of War Studies,
 King's College London
Ambassador Prof. Dr h.c. Wolfgang Ischinger
Prof. Dr Guntram B. Wolff, Professor of Economics, Solvay Brussels School of Economics & Management,
 Free University of Brussels
- Chair:** Dr Ursula Weidenfeld
- 1.00 p.m. **Closing remarks**
Barbara Frenz, Prof. Dr Dr h.c. Clemens Fuest,
Prof. Jörg Rocholl, Ph.D., Prof. Dr Dr h.c. mult. Andreas Voßkuhle
- To be followed by a Farewell Reception**

Practical Information

- Venue: Allianz Forum, Pariser Platz 6, 10117 Berlin
- Registration: Please register by **15th October 2026** at the latest. The link in our email will take you to our online registration. Our confirmation of your registration will allow you access to the venue. Please note that, due to the limited capacity of the congress hall, registrations will be processed in the order in which they are received.
- Fee: There is no conference fee.
- Liability: We regret that we cannot accept any liability for personal injury or damage to property either at the Congress or when travelling to and from the venue.
- Information: For further information, please contact the Hanns Martin Schleyer Foundation, Albrechtstraße 22, 10117 Berlin, Telephone: +49 (0)30 27 90 71 64, anmeldung@schleyer-stiftung.de, www.schleyer-stiftung.de
- Congress Directors: Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Clemens Fuest, President of the ifo Institute – Leibniz Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich
Prof. Jörg Rocholl, Ph.D., President, European School of Management and Technology Berlin
Prof. Dr Dr h.c. mult. Andreas Voßkuhle, former President of the Federal Constitutional Court, Chair of Political Science, Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg
Barbara Frenz, Executive Board Member, Hanns Martin Schleyer Foundation, Berlin