

Europe's Moment of Truth & A New German Leadership

Annual Conference of the Institut für Europäische Politik
in cooperation with the Academic Advisory Board of the IEP

Thursday 25 and Friday 26 September 2025

Venue:

Festsaal in der Luisenstraße
Luisenstraße 56, D-10115 Berlin

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09:30 Meeting of the Board of Trustees (members only)

11:00 Coffee Break and Registration of Academic Advisory Board

11:30 Meeting of the Academic Advisory Board (members only)

12:30 Lunch Break and Registration for the Annual Conference

13:15 Words of Welcome

Prof. Dr Frank SCHIMMELFENNIG, Professor of European Politics, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH) & Chairman of the Academic Advisory Board of Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin

Gunther KRICHBAUM, Minister of State for Europe, Federal Foreign Office, Berlin (video message)

Keynote

European partner countries and EU institutions have high expectations of the new German government. Make-or-break decisions on European integration will have to be taken in the new legislature, including on competitiveness, defence, enlargement and the new EU budget. The new German coalition partners share some positions on these issues but diverge on others. This keynote will line out the common ground they have found, the priorities set in the coalition treaty and the ambitions of the new German European Policy. To achieve these ambitions, Germany relies on its partners. The keynote will therefore be followed by comments from a French and Polish perspective.

Anja WALLAU, Ambassador, Director for EU Strategic Policy Issues, EU Coordination and EU External Affairs, Federal Foreign Office, Berlin

Comments

Dr Maria SKÓRA, Associate Research Fellow, Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin

Prof. Dr Christian LEQUESNE, Professor of Political Sciences, Center for International Studies, Sciences Po Paris

Moderator

Prof. Dr Funda TEKIN, Director, Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin

14:30 Group Picture

14:35 Coffee Break

15:00 Panel I: Increasing the European Union's Capacity to Act

The challenges facing the EU are enormous, including on competitiveness, defence or enlargement. While ideas about tackling many of them abound, it is often in the implementation phase where the EU reaches the limits of its capacity to act. This panel will first explore the nature of these limits – which institutional, budgetary, or political situations most impede the EU's capacity to act? Second, the panel will discuss and evaluate proposals to overcome these limits and third, panelists will deliberate which

resources the EU would need to put them into practise. Overall, the panel will discuss different understandings of the EU's limited capacity to act, map the proposals for change, and discuss which actions are most feasible and realistic to strengthen the EU.

Speakers

Jo LEINEN, Former Chair, Committee of Constitutional Affairs & Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety, Brussels/Strasbourg

Prof. Dr Daniela SCHWARZER, Member of the Executive Board, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Berlin & Honorary Professor of Political Science at Freie Universität Berlin

Prof. Dr Christian CALLIESS, Chair for Public, European and Environmental Law, Freie Universität Berlin

Moderator

Prof. Dr Theresa KUHN, Professor of Modern European History and Politics & Academic Director, Amsterdam Centre for European Studies, University of Amsterdam

16:15

Coffee Break

16:45

Panel II: Europe's Crash-Course in Defence

The latest wake-up call for European defence cooperation, resulting from the changes in the transatlantic relationship, has triggered first responses. While the sense of urgency and overall societal resilience still differs across the EU, military and civilian security threats urge the EU and its Member States to make up for the neglected cooperation in security and defence in the past. Massive amounts of investments have been made available both by the EU and by the German government to ramp up the production of military goods. New connections are formed and old relationships revived, for example in a coalition of the willing to support Ukraine. With potentially less US commitment to NATO, the EU's relations to other NATO partners like Turkey and especially the UK gain importance. This panel will explore the promises and pitfalls of European cooperation, harmonisation, and innovation in the defence industry.

Speakers

Dr Tobias CREMER, Member of the Committee on Security and Defence, European Parliament, Brussels/Strasbourg

Prof. Dr Kristi RAIK, Director, International Centre for Defence and Security, Tallinn & Adjunct Professor of International Relations, University of Turku

Dr Ronja KEMPIN, Senior Fellow EU/Europe & Co-Chair of Thematic Working Group Reordering European Security, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin

Moderator

Prof. Dr Tomáš WEISS, Jean Monnet Chair in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, Charles University, Prague

18:00

Meet & Greet

18:30

Light Dinner Buffet / Reception

09:30 Panel III: Balancing Mobility & Migration within the Schengen Area

In the year of the 40th anniversary of the Schengen agreement, some degree of internal border controls within the EU has become the new normal. This has consequences for Union citizens, all people on the move and the EU's internal market alike. A core reason for border controls is seen in a dysfunctional Common European Asylum System, the debate on which has not gone quite after the controversial New Pact on Asylum and Migration was agreed in 2024. This panel will discuss the state of the Schengen area and the interrelation with EU migration and asylum policies and debate whether and how the EU Member States can pursue a cooperative approach that safeguards both human rights and the freedom of movement.

Speakers

Sebastian GRÖNING-VON THÜNA, Head of Section Cross-Border Cooperation with France and the BENELUX States, Federal Foreign Office, Berlin

Prof. Dr Natascha ZAUN, Professor for Political Science, Leuphana University Lüneburg

Prof. Dr Daniel THYM, Professor of Public, European, and International Law, University of Konstanz

Moderator

Dr Johanna HASE, Research Advisor to the Director, Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin

10:45 Coffee Break

11:15 Panel IV: The Geoeconomics of the Emerging Global Order

The numerous current challenges push EU leaders to invest 'whatever it takes' with a view to strengthening domestic markets rather than investing abroad. New tariff policies and a possible trade war restrict trade with the US, especially since the second Trump administration has taken office. Particularly in the areas of defence and competitiveness, the new geopolitical realities lead to a focus on European cooperation and production and on de-risking relations not only with China, but with the US. What does this imply for the European Commission's agenda in negotiating trade agreements, such with MERCOSUR, India, or Indonesia? Where does it have the Member States' support, and where does it risk political backlash? How can the EU's economy be competitive in attracting innovative businesses? And what, if any, are the opportunities for export-oriented economies in times of deglobalisation?

Speakers

Dr Sabine WEYAND, Director-General, DG TRADE, European Commission, Brussels

Prof. Dr Guntram WOLFF, Professor of Economics, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) & Senior Fellow, Bruegel, Brussels

Dr Elvire FABRY, Senior Research Fellow, Jacques Delors Institute, Paris

Moderator

Prof. Dr Joachim SCHILD, Chair for Comparative Politics & Jean Monnet Chair “EU Trade Policy and the Rise of Geopolitics”, University of Trier

12:30

Conclusions and Outlook

Prof. Dr Funda TEKIN, Director, Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin

12:45

Farewell Lunch