

EFNI 2026 DRAFT PROGRAM

EFNI - where ideas become policy

How can we operate effectively and ethically in a world that is changing faster than we can keep up with? Participants at the 15th anniversary edition of the European Forum for New Ideas will be seeking answers to this question. Discussions on the future will begin with a reflection on the values shaping contemporary societies. The Forum will conclude with a speech by Prime Minister Donald Tusk. The event, organised by the Lewiatan Confederation, will take place on 14-16 October 2026 in Sopot.

Today, we know enough to be able to make sense of the emerging reality. Wars, the shifting balance of power between major powers, the energy transition and the development of artificial intelligence are redefining the conditions under which businesses operate and societies function. This year's EFNI will provide a forum for discussing how to build resilience, competitiveness and long-term strategies in a world of constant change.

The event will be organised around four new thematic tracks: Our New World, Our New Europe, Our New Poland and Our New Human.

In debates on the economy, technology, security and social change, participants will not focus solely on identifying problems. The aim of this anniversary edition is, above all, to seek solutions that can translate into concrete actions by businesses, public administration and European institutions.

The starting point for this year's discussions will be a presentation of the results of the World Values Survey – regarded as one of the most important international projects examining changes in values and social attitudes. For almost five decades, this survey has made it possible to track global processes of social, cultural and civilisational change, covering most of the world's countries and around 90 per cent of its population. In the session devoted to the World Values Survey, chaired by Prof. Radosław Markowski, Prof. Christian Welzel, co-creator of the 'Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map of the World' – widely recognised in the global social sciences – will present the global and European perspectives of the last half-century. Key findings for Poland will be discussed by Prof. Agnieszka Turska-Kawa, a member of the team analysing the WVS results.

Prof. Jerzy Hausner and Cardinal Grzegorz Ryś will then reflect on the condition of modern man, presenting the main ideas of Pope Leo XIV's encyclical Magnifica Humanitas. The opening of EFNI will culminate in a debate on 'Values and the Meaning of Life' featuring Dr Katarzyna Kasi, Prof. Karolina Wigura, Prof. Magdalena Środa, Prof. Andrzej Leder and Prof. Michał Rusinek

For 15 years, EFNI has served as a platform for dialogue between representatives of business, academia, culture and public administration. It is a place where ideas are transformed into concrete recommendations and proposals for action relating to the economy and public policy.

The forum brings together different communities to discuss the future of Poland, Europe and the world.

Our New World

A Multipolar World in Practice: Europe's Strategy Between the U.S., China, and Russia

In a world increasingly shifting toward a multipolar order, Europe faces the need to define its own strategy among the major powers that are reshaping the global framework of security, the economy, and influence. Relations with the U.S. are being tested by Washington's new approach to its global role and its partners in Europe, which, in light of recent discussions about the realignment of the alliance's strategic interests and potential tensions in the Arctic, takes on new significance for transatlantic security. At the same time, China is intensifying its economic influence, and Russia is leveraging its cooperation with Beijing and multilateral tools to challenge Western orders. Participants in the debate will consider how Europe can develop an autonomous, balanced strategy in this complex landscape: from cooperation with partners, through the management of geopolitical risks, to building economic resilience and security in the face of rivalry between Washington, Beijing, and Moscow.

Multilateralism 2.0: What Does the "Global South" Want?

The term "Global South" is increasingly being replaced by the phrase "Global Majority." In essence, these countries have nothing in common except their reluctance to continue an international order based on Western dominance. How do they envision the functioning of a new multilateralism and the reform of international organizations? How do they view Europe today?

The Middle East Conflict. Will This War Ever End?

The Middle East remains one of the most complex and unstable regions in the world. Successive waves of violence, shifting alliances, and the clashing interests of global and regional actors have for decades hindered the establishment of lasting peace. However, the scale of the impact of recent events—from Hamas's attack on Israel, through Israel's retaliation in Palestine and Lebanon, to the U.S.-Israeli strike on Iran—has turned the region's security architecture upside down and destabilized international trade. Who stands to gain and who stands to lose from this war, and how can it be ended? What are its implications for the Gulf states, and will their development model collapse permanently? How can Europe contribute to bringing stability to the region?

The World's "Bottlenecks": Energy and Raw Materials

What does the global energy and raw materials landscape look like, and what tools—from diversification to investments in new technologies—can increase the resilience of countries and companies? Risks associated with key points in global supply chains, the disruption of which

triggers immediate economic and political turmoil: the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, the Strait of Malacca, and transportation infrastructure in the Arctic.

What Can We Learn from 250 Years of U.S. History?

Digital Extortion or Image Protection? Ethics, Algorithms, and the Battle for Business Reputation Online.

A company's reputation has become the most fragile currency in today's market. The development of generative artificial intelligence, bot farms, and the automation of online hate have made it possible to launch a massive attack on a company's reputation in a matter of minutes and at minimal cost. However, a true crisis of trust arises at the intersection of technology and the controversial business models of review aggregation platforms. Increasingly, the line between transparency and the phenomenon described by managers as "digital extortion" is blurring. Is a model in which a business owner must pay for a "premium package" or moderation services to control the damaging flood of anonymous, often AI-generated comments still freedom of speech, or has it become a modern mechanism of market pressure? During the panel discussion, business leaders, cybersecurity experts, and lawyers will attempt to define the ethical boundaries in the online platform business. We will discuss how to effectively protect companies from misinformation without silencing the authentic voices of employees and consumers, and what legal tools the market needs to curb toxic practices of monetizing fear.

The Future Beyond AI. Where is technology taking us?

We are living at a time when artificial intelligence is ceasing to be merely a technological curiosity and is becoming one of the key drivers of change in the economy and society. How will AI affect our lives, the way we work, our education and our relationships? Which skills will become more important, and which will become less so? In this conversation, we'll look at what lies ahead following this technological breakthrough – and whether we can consciously prepare ourselves for the world that is currently taking shape.

Our New Europe

A new architecture of growth: Where can we find competitive advantages in a changing world?

In the face of global tensions, rising business costs, and the energy and technological transitions, Poland and Europe are faced with the need to redefine the sources of economic growth. Competitiveness today requires more than just cheap labor or scale of production—innovation, productivity, modern infrastructure, access to talent, and an efficient government creating a predictable regulatory environment are becoming key. The panel will focus on how to build new

competitive advantages in a world prone to shocks and rapid change. Participants will consider what investment, institutional, and technological decisions can strengthen the position of Poland and Europe, and how to leverage global trends to become not merely a recipient of change, but a co-creator of it.

Europe's Strategic Autonomy: Utopia or a Realistic Prospect?

The war in Ukraine, rising geopolitical tensions, strained relations with the U.S., and mounting challenges related to security and competitiveness have led Europe to take the concept of "strategic autonomy" seriously. However, there is no consistent definition of this concept. The prevailing view is that the European Union should "stand on its own two feet" and become independent of external suppliers, at least in strategic sectors ranging from energy to healthcare. But is this even possible in a world of such deep interdependencies? And isn't it too late for this, given the rapid development of other nations, particularly the United States and China? The panelists will attempt to explain how to understand strategic autonomy and how Europe can, in practice, strengthen its position in the world.

Is Europe Ready for Another Round of Enlargement?

The strategic implications of admitting new member states—from the impact on the Union's security and geopolitical resilience, through institutional reform (particularly voting, the budget, and executive capacity), to challenges related to economic convergence, the rule of law, and the candidates' ability to implement the *acquis*.

"The Hungary Effect": Does the Visegrad Group Still Matter?

How does the shift in the political landscape in Budapest affect the cohesion and future of the V4 as a framework for cooperation within the EU? On which issues do Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava, and Budapest have differing interests, and on which issues can the group speak with one voice? What is the V4 position on the EU's enlargement and neighborhood policies?

European Democracy: Can the Liberal Order Be Sustained?

How can the EU build resilience against phenomena that undermine liberal order, such as polarization, disinformation, authoritarian pressure, and the erosion of the rule of law? Are current mechanisms—from rule-of-law procedures to regulations governing the media and digital platforms—sufficient to protect the democratic model in a rapidly changing political environment? Is there a chance to build a "European dimension" for politics, pan-European parties, etc.?

Security "Made in Europe" - are we ready for self-sufficiency?

In the face of growing geopolitical tensions and the ongoing war on the eastern border of the European Union, the question of Europe's ability to ensure its own security has taken on critical importance. Is the European defense industry ready to meet these new challenges? What investments are necessary today to build real resilience and strategic sovereignty? During the debate, we will discuss the role of the defense industry in the security architecture of Poland and Europe, the potential for innovation, and whether it is possible to combine security interests with economic development.

Europe from the employers' perspective. How can we regain competitiveness in the new reality?

Representatives of employers' organisations from various European Union countries will meet to jointly examine the key challenges and opportunities facing the European economy. The debate will provide an opportunity to compare the perspectives of individual countries and identify areas in which Europe should act collectively to strengthen its competitiveness and resilience.

New trade, new opportunities. Are European SMEs making the most of the potential offered by digital platforms?

Digital platforms are transforming the way businesses reach customers, build brands and grow sales – both domestically and internationally. For the SME sector, they are becoming not only a sales channel, but also a tool for expansion, promotion and building a competitive advantage. Are European businesses making full use of the potential of modern trading and e-commerce platforms? What barriers are hindering the growth of digital sales and entry into new markets? In this debate, we will discuss the future of trade, the role of innovative sales models, and how to create the conditions that will enable European SMEs to compete more effectively in the digital economy.

Capital for security: how to finance European defense in the new reality

Europe is entering a period of redefining its approach to security—both strategically and economically. Growing geopolitical tensions and the war in Ukraine are forcing a significant increase in defense spending, the scale of which exceeds the capacity of national budgets alone. This raises new questions about the role of the financial sector in building security. What instruments can mobilize private capital? Should defense become a fully-fledged investment sector? How can ESG policies be reconciled with defense sector financing? The panel will focus on new models of security financing and the role of banks, funds, and public institutions in building a resilient and secure Europe.

The single market in practice: how to unleash the potential of European SMEs

The single market is one of the greatest strengths of the European economy, yet for many small and medium-sized enterprises, its potential remains untapped. Regulatory barriers, differences in the implementation of regulations, limited access to financing, and difficulties in scaling up operations mean that SMEs are not always able to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the single market. In the face of growing global competition and the digital and green transitions, strengthening the position of SMEs is becoming crucial for Europe's future. During the panel, we will discuss how to simplify the regulatory environment, increase access to markets and capital, and create conditions conducive to the growth and expansion of European companies. We will also discuss the role of Member States in building a cohesive and supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurship.

Europe on credit? How to finance infrastructure, transformation and development

Europe today faces the need to undertake unprecedented investment – ranging from infrastructure modernisation and the energy transition to digitalisation, the development of new technologies and the strengthening of the economy's competitiveness. At the same time, many countries are grappling with rising debt, high financing costs and pressure to maintain the stability of public finances. Is the current model of development financing sufficient given the scale of the challenges facing the European Union? What role should joint financial instruments, European funds, development banks and private capital play? In this debate, we will discuss the future of European investment policy, new mechanisms for economic cooperation, and how to finance ambitious development projects without compromising competitiveness and long-term economic stability.

The sea that connects. How Baltic cooperation can drive Europe's development

The Baltic Sea is becoming one of Europe's most important economic and strategic regions. The region's location, port development, infrastructure investment and growing cooperation between Poland and the Nordic countries are creating new opportunities for trade, industry and security of supply. At a time of growing geopolitical tensions and the restructuring of global supply chains, the Baltic Sea is gaining importance as a key transport and economic route linking Northern and Central Europe with global markets. How can the potential of Polish ports and maritime infrastructure be harnessed? How can we attract investment and build the competitiveness of the Baltic Sea region? What role can cooperation with Scandinavia play in the development of new technologies, energy and the green economy? The debate will explore how the Baltic Sea can become one of the drivers of Europe's growth and a cornerstone of its economic resilience.

European cities and regions: from safety to sustainable development and improving quality of life

Cities and regions are increasingly becoming key players responsible for Europe's security, resilience and long-term development. It is at the local level that the challenges of the energy

transition, adaptation to climate change, mobility, spatial planning and social cohesion intersect today. How can we design cities that are safe, green and people-friendly all at once? Which decisions taken by local authorities genuinely improve the quality of life and the competitiveness of regions? During the panel discussion, experts and local government leaders will discuss best practices, innovative solutions and how local strategies can effectively support European objectives.

Nuclear Energy: between safety, sovereignty, and innovation

In the face of growing geopolitical challenges and the energy transition, nuclear energy is once again becoming a key element of strategic debates in Europe. Although in 2023 nuclear power plants in the EU generated over 619,000 GWh of electricity, accounting for approximately 22.8% of total electricity production and ranking it among the most important low-carbon energy sources, this share is declining in the long term due to the decommissioning of old reactors and a lack of major investments in new technologies. The debate on nuclear power is also a question of energy supply security, the resilience of energy systems, sovereignty against external geopolitical influences, and the innovation of future technologies. During the panel, we will consider the opportunities and challenges for nuclear energy in Europe, how to shape investment and regulatory policy, and what impact an increased role for nuclear power in the energy mix might have on the economy and regional security.

Renewable Energy as the foundation of the energy transition: opportunities and risks for Europe and Poland

The energy transition based on renewable energy sources has become one of the most important elements of the development strategies of both the European Union and Poland. In 2024, renewable energy accounted for an increasing share of the EU's electricity mix—solar farms generated more energy than coal-fired power plants, and the share of wind and solar in the EU's electricity reached approximately 29%. In Poland, the share of RES in electricity production rose to a record high of approximately 29% in 2024, mainly due to the expansion of wind and solar installations, although coal still dominates the energy mix. The panel will examine the social and economic dimensions of this change: the benefits of diversifying energy sources, improving air quality, creating new jobs, and reducing dependence on fossil fuels; as well as the challenges facing the system—from grid modernization and public acceptance of local investments to the need for workforce training and adaptation. The debate will demonstrate how the green transition can serve as a catalyst for sustainable development, rather than merely a cost challenge.

The new Green Deal. How not to lose the race for competitiveness?

Europe is currently facing a crucial stage in its green transition – but its success will depend not only on the pace of emissions reductions, but also on whether Europe remains a competitive place to invest and do business. High energy prices, growing competition from the US and China,

and the need to modernise infrastructure raise the question of a new model for green growth. How can we harness the potential of renewable energy, nuclear power and the electrification of the economy without increasing costs for European companies? How can we combine decarbonisation with innovation, investment and productivity? Can the Green Deal become a competitive advantage for Europe, rather than a burden on its competitiveness?

Digital Europe. Do we still have our own strategy for technological sovereignty?

Europe is facing a transformative digital revolution that is redefining the continent's economies, politics, and security. The question of its own strategy for technological sovereignty has become crucial: Can the EU innovate and regulate simultaneously while maintaining its independence from tech giants in the U.S. and China? The debate will address the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation, the role of member states in building their own platforms and technologies, the importance of investing in skills, and the strategies that will allow Europe to maintain its influence in the global technology race. It is a discussion about whether Europe today has a vision and the capacity to act in the digital world.

The algorithm economy: how AI is transforming development models

Artificial intelligence is no longer merely a technology of the future—it is becoming one of the key factors in the competitiveness of economies and nations. The panel will focus on how AI is transforming development models, productivity, and the way businesses, public administration, and entire economic sectors operate. Participants will consider the opportunities and risks this transformation brings for Europe, and whether the European Union can build its own competitive development model based on data and algorithms. Another key theme of the debate will be Poland's place in this landscape—its technological potential, human capital, and the barriers that may determine whether we become a co-creator or merely a recipient of the global AI revolution. The debate will demonstrate that what is at stake is not only innovation, but the future model of development.

Threats that never sleep: Cybersecurity as a shared responsibility

Digital threats are evolving faster than our ability to detect and neutralize them. Ransomware attacks, data breaches, impersonation of institutions, disinformation campaigns, and the use of AI to generate manipulative content are making cybersecurity one of the key challenges for governments, businesses, and citizens. In this panel, we will explore how to build a system in which responsibility for digital security is shared—from users, through businesses, to public administration. We will discuss digital education, institutional resilience, regulations, the role of technology, and the importance of international cooperation. Participants will assess what actions are necessary to ensure that society is aware, prepared, and safe in a world where threats never sleep.

A Plan for Ukraine: Reconstruction, Investment, and the Role of European Business

The reconstruction of Ukraine is one of the greatest economic and political challenges facing Europe today, but it also presents a tremendous opportunity to build a modern, resilient, and innovative economy. The scale of the destruction requires the mobilization of public funds, international financial institutions, and private capital. It will be crucial not only to rebuild the infrastructure but also to redesign it—based on green technologies, digitalization, and integration with the European market. In this debate, we will explore how to effectively coordinate the efforts of governments, businesses, and international institutions, which financing mechanisms will be crucial, and what role Poland and European companies can play in this process. We will also discuss how Ukraine's reconstruction can serve as a catalyst for development across the entire region.

What Does the Future Hold for Ukraine?

This panel will address the most important questions related to Russia's aggression against Ukraine today. How can Ukraine move forward, given the United States' shift away from Europe and the uncertainty surrounding the future of European nations (the possibility of populists winning in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom)? Is it true that Vladimir Putin is currently losing control of the war? And how should Ukraine best prepare for the end of the war? What role should Poland play? How can Ukrainian-Polish relations best be shaped?

Germany in Europe: Ally or Competitor?

The panel will address the most important questions regarding Germany's current state, its current policies, and its relations with Poland and the rest of Europe. Why is Chancellor Friedrich Merz performing so poorly in the polls, even though he is allocating enormous sums of money to investments and military spending? Could populists (AfD) win the federal elections in Germany, and what would the consequences be? What vision do Germans have for themselves today—a welfare state? The best-armed country in Europe? A country rebuilding Ukraine? Or the leader of a united Europe? What is the state of Polish-German relations, and how can these relations best be developed?

PPWR (Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation) – a new era of packaging requirements. Will Europe be able to keep up with its own ambitions?

The PPWR sets a new course for the packaging market in the European Union. Requirements regarding the reduction of packaging, design for recycling, the use of recycled materials, and reuse systems will affect nearly every industry. The greatest challenge, however, is no longer the direction of the changes themselves, but the pace of their implementation. Businesses need to learn as soon as possible the details of the regulations that will be specified in numerous delegated and implementing acts. It will be up to them to determine what the new obligations

will look like in practice and how much time companies will have to prepare for the changes. The panel will provide an opportunity to discuss not only the environmental goals of the PPWR but, above all, the feasibility of the new regulations and their impact on the competitiveness of the European economy. We will invite business representatives, environmental and economic experts, and policymakers to join the discussion so that together we can answer the question of how to implement the PPWR in an effective, predictable, and feasible manner, without undermining the competitiveness of European industry.

The Packaging Market Under the Microscope: Will Nationalization of the Sector Solve the Waste Problem?

The draft law on packaging and packaging waste is one of the most important—but also one of the most controversial—environmental reforms of recent years. Businesses do not dispute the need to implement an effective packaging return system or the “polluter pays” principle. The dispute centers on how the system should operate and its compliance with EU law. The draft bill calls for far-reaching nationalization of the system, transferring management of funds to a single public entity, and the dissolution of packaging recovery organizations. To date, no analyses have been presented confirming that such a nationalized model will be more effective than the solutions in most EU countries and will result in higher levels of separate collection and recycling. During the legislative process, concerns regarding the draft’s impact on competition were raised not only by business organizations but also by certain government ministries. Will a state monopoly actually improve the system’s efficiency, or will it instead increase costs that consumers will ultimately bear? During the debate, representatives from government, business, and experts will discuss how to create a system that complies with EU law, is environmentally effective, and at the same time supports the economy’s competitiveness.

The EU’s shrinking industrial sector under pressure from China. What can be done to maintain the competitiveness of industrial production in the EU, taking the household appliances sector as an example?

The household appliances sector is one of the largest in the EU, providing around one million jobs across more than 130 plants. The sector is particularly strong in Poland, which ranks first in the European Union and second in the world – just behind China – in terms of household appliance production. Industrial production generates real added value, drives GDP and stimulates related sectors such as transport, logistics and services. Industry is also a key driver of research, development and innovation. At the same time, we must face up to the challenges. The time to act is now! It is easier to defend existing industry than to try to rebuild it from the ruins. The key to the future lies in maintaining a modern industrial base, innovation, expertise, and research and development. It is a mistake to think that Europe will develop only services, whilst the bulk of industry relocates outside the EU. Research and development are inextricably linked to manufacturing.

The Power of Platforms: How Do Global Technology Companies Influence States, the Law and Democracy?

Global tech platforms are no longer just companies. They control communications infrastructure, access to information, citizens' data, advertising, visibility algorithms and, increasingly, the terms of public debate. Their influence extends beyond the marketplace – it reaches into governments, institutions, the legislative process, education, the media and democracy. This panel will explore how Europe can respond to the growing power of platforms: through regulation, transparency in lobbying, the protection of citizens, stronger public institutions and greater accountability on the part of tech companies.

Our New Poland

Poland is a country of economic success. How can we maintain the pace of economic growth in an increasingly competitive world?

How to Promote the “Poland” Brand

The “Poland” brand is shaped by the efforts of many different sectors—government, public institutions, regions, business, academia, culture, sports, the Polish diaspora, and civil society organizations. How can these initiatives be combined into a coherent, long-term system for strengthening the country's reputation and international standing? The panel will focus on the practical aspects of cooperation and coordination: the division of responsibilities, setting common priorities, utilizing data, planning activities, and evaluating their results. Participants will discuss the most significant institutional and organizational barriers, as well as solutions that could increase the effectiveness of these initiatives. The discussion will explore the potential of a model based on sustainable cooperation, shared standards, and consistent management of Poland's reputation.

Long-Term Investment in the Polish Economy - Barriers and Factors

Long-term investment is a prerequisite for the long-term growth of an economy's productivity. Today, this applies in particular to resources and sectors such as energy, water, rare raw materials, digital technologies, and space technologies. That is why it is so important to identify, on the one hand, the barriers and, on the other, the factors that influence the initiation and completion of long-term, large-scale investment projects. These factors stem from the functioning of the capital market—including the banking system—the economic regulatory framework, and entrepreneurial dynamism.

Poland's Economic Credibility Index (IWEPI)

A country's economic credibility is of fundamental importance in times like these. Any noticeable decline in this credibility limits the ability to respond to crisis situations. The IWEPI concept was developed by a team of experts collaborating with the Open Eyes Economy Summit, the European Financial Congress, the Economic Freedom Foundation, the Institute of Public Finance, the Lewiatan Confederation, and the Warsaw School of Economics. The team has prepared and published three editions of the Index. This year, the fifth edition of the Index will be presented.

Poland Through the Eyes of Journalists from Around the World

In Poland, we discuss events in our country on a daily basis. But do others see us the way we see ourselves? This panel will bring together journalists from around the world who will share their perspectives on our country's politics from the outside. In what context is Poland viewed? What is it associated with? Is it part of the global power dynamics—political and business—or is it rather seen as a peripheral and not particularly significant country?

Polish Added Value: Local Content in Strategic Projects

Large-scale infrastructure investments are increasingly viewed not only as transportation or logistics projects, but also as tools for building a country's long-term economic advantage. Strategic projects implemented in Poland can serve not only as a catalyst for infrastructure development, but also as an opportunity to strengthen domestic capabilities, develop innovative technologies, and build a strong support base for Polish companies. A key challenge today is answering the question of how strategic investments can increase the participation of Polish companies in supply chains, support the development of local industry, and create sustainable added value for the economy. In this context, the concept of "local content" takes on new significance—as an element of development policy that supports innovation, jobs, and the country's competitiveness. During the debate, we will also discuss best practices from Poland and abroad, as well as regulatory barriers that may hinder the effective implementation of mechanisms supporting the country's economic potential.

Are Quotas Just a Women's Issue? Men on Leadership and the Responsibility to Drive Change

Poland is among the EU countries with the highest proportion of women in management positions; however, the higher up the corporate ladder, the more this representation declines, particularly on the boards of the largest publicly traded companies. This is precisely the issue addressed by the directive on gender balance in corporate governance, which Poland is implementing with some delay, but whose provisions could significantly change the way we think about appointments and access to top positions. Are quotas a tool for change, or just another

regulatory obligation? Why does a mechanism that has proven effective in many EU countries still stir up such strong emotions? And can we talk about balance in corporate governance without discussing the role of men as leaders, board members, and supervisory board members? The panel will discuss what the directive could change in practice: the processes for selecting corporate governance bodies, accountability for nominations, and why gender balance is not solely a women's issue but part of a broader discussion on leadership.

A strategy for Polish industry

Europe finds itself at a geopolitical crossroads. On the one hand, it is competing with Asian economic powers, and on the other, it is facing growing assertiveness from the United States. Furthermore, European industry is grappling with high energy prices, which are undermining its competitiveness. Poland is not an isolated economic island. Our industrial heritage is also at risk if no action is taken to preserve it and support its development. The aim of this discussion is to define the importance of industry for Poland's development in an increasingly turbulent world and to discuss the need for a Polish industrial strategy.

Infrastructure that transforms a country: railways at the heart of Poland's transformation

Modern transportation infrastructure is becoming one of the key factors determining the pace of economic growth, investment attractiveness, and residents' quality of life. Today, Poland has the opportunity to implement projects that could redefine the country's mobility and transportation network—from the development of high-speed rail and the modernization of existing connections to the construction of the Central Transportation Hub. These investments are significant not only in terms of infrastructure but also strategically: they influence regional development, the labor market, security, and the competitiveness of the economy. In this debate, we will discuss how to effectively harness the potential of railways to build a modern state, what challenges are associated with implementing large-scale projects, and how to balance development ambitions with the needs of residents, businesses, and the climate transition.

The development of air transport in Poland - challenges, investments, and the future

The Polish aviation market is currently one of the fastest-growing in Europe - in 2025, the country's airports handled over 66 million passengers. This dynamic growth translates into investment pressure: there are already 15 passenger airports in operation, which are expanding their route networks and infrastructure. At the same time, forecasts indicate that by 2035, traffic could exceed 100 million travelers annually. In this context, the Central Communication Port (CPK) project plays a key role; it is set to become a hub for intercontinental traffic and achieve a capacity of approximately 30-34 million passengers per year in its first phase. Will the CPK strengthen Poland's position in the global network of connections, or will it rather shift the balance of power among regional airports? How can the development of a central hub be reconciled with the

growing role of local airports? The panel will attempt to answer these questions and define the future of Polish airspace.

Energy that doesn't hold back development. Networks, storage, and system resilience as a new civilizational challenge

The energy transition is increasingly taking place not in power plants, but in grids, storage facilities, and the system's ability to manage fluctuations in generation. Without modern energy infrastructure, it is impossible to develop industry, attract investment, or achieve ambitious climate goals. The panel will address a key question of today: how to build an energy system that is stable, flexible, and ready to meet the projected energy demand from the digital economy, electromobility, and new technologies. Participants will consider the role of expanding transmission and distribution networks, energy storage, system digitization, and regulations that could accelerate or hinder investments. Is modern energy infrastructure becoming one of the key conditions for a country's competitiveness today?

Civil resilience in practice. The role of citizens in the new security model

In the face of crises—ranging from climate threats to cyberattacks and geopolitical conflicts—civil resilience is becoming the cornerstone of national security and the safety of local communities. The panel will examine the role of citizens in this system, including preparedness for using shelters, emergency procedures, and cooperation with various agencies at the local and national levels. Participants will discuss best practices in crisis education, coordination among fire departments, police, public administration, and non-governmental organizations, as well as mechanisms that strengthen community readiness to effectively respond to unpredictable threats, minimize the impact of crises, and enhance citizens' sense of security.

How do culture and the creative industries shape Poland's brand image and build the country's competitive advantages?

Why are some countries associated with innovation, while others are known for fashion, design, or film? Increasingly, the strength of a country's brand is determined not only by its economy and politics, but also by creators, companies, and brands from the creative sectors. Video games, fashion, architecture, film, music, and design are becoming some of the country's most effective ambassadors, reaching millions of audiences around the world. Poland possesses exceptional creative potential. Game studios, designers, architects, filmmakers, and fashion brands based here are winning international awards, expanding their global reach, and shaping the way Poland is perceived. How can this potential be harnessed to build a modern national brand? How can we align the success of creators and entrepreneurs with the state's long-term strategy? What conditions are needed for creativity to become one of the pillars of Poland's competitiveness?

The panel will feature selected leaders from Poland's most recognizable creative brands, who will discuss how creativity translates into economic development, exports, soft power, and Poland's appeal.

Sports as a tool for promoting the country, business, and values

Sports have become one of the most effective tools for building the image of countries, brands, and local communities. Major sporting events attract global attention, strengthen a country's reputation, and generate tangible economic benefits. Thanks to their charisma and global reach, athletes can effectively convey the values of a country and a business to the public, while companies, through collaboration with them, can build trust and emotional bonds with their audience. Their involvement in campaigns or social initiatives expands the reach of the message and builds lasting emotional relationships with audiences. At the same time, sports influence social attitudes, promote health, equal opportunities, integration, and responsibility. During the panel, we will discuss how to strategically leverage sports to promote the state and business, where the line between authenticity and marketing lies, and how investments in sports can strengthen social capital and support long-term development.

A turning point: What does the Polish justice system really need today?

For years, the Polish justice system has been overburdened and mired in a deep crisis of public trust. Record-breaking delays in proceedings, unclear institutional responsibilities, tensions surrounding judicial independence, and a lack of legislative stability undermine not only citizens' faith in the state but also the economy's competitiveness. Companies face the unpredictability of rulings and protracted litigation, while citizens grapple with the feeling that justice is ineffective and distant. The panel will focus on key reforms that can restore the efficiency of the courts, strengthen the rule of law, and rebuild public trust. Participants will consider what organizational, legislative, and technological decisions are necessary today to make the justice system the foundation of a stable and modern state.

Cultural Diplomacy in Times of Crisis: Culture as an Element of State Strategy

In times of growing geopolitical tensions and military and social threats, culture is becoming a vital tool for shaping a country's image and strengthening its position on the international stage. This panel is dedicated to the role of cultural diplomacy and investments in artistic projects, which, despite uncertainty and threats, enable the promotion of values, creativity, and national identity. Experts and practitioners will discuss how strategic investment in cultural initiatives not only builds Poland's image in Europe and the world but also strengthens societal resilience, integrates local communities, and creates lasting international bonds. The discussion will demonstrate that culture can be just as essential an element of state strategy as traditional foreign policy instruments.

Innovation Embedded in the Organization: What Really Worked for Polish Market Leaders

Innovation is increasingly less often the result of individual ideas and more often the result of a deliberately designed organizational culture and effective leadership. What sets apart companies that are able to consistently turn innovation into a competitive advantage and sustainable growth? What role does management play in building a system that supports the development of new solutions? Should innovation be the domain of specialized teams, or the responsibility of the entire organization? In times of economic uncertainty and growing pressure for efficiency, the question of funding innovation and assessing its real impact on business results also takes on particular significance. The panel will provide an opportunity to discuss with leaders of Polish companies proven solutions, best practices, and experiences that demonstrate how to effectively build organizations capable of continuous development and the implementation of innovations.

Deregulation - How to Systematically Address the Problem of Excessive Regulation.

An excessive number of regulations, frequent changes to the law, and complex administrative procedures limit the competitiveness of the Polish economy, slow down investment processes, and increase the costs of doing business. Deregulation does not mean abandoning necessary standards, but rather creating a more transparent, predictable, and effective legal environment. The key challenge is to develop sustainable mechanisms for reviewing and simplifying regulations that will support entrepreneurship, innovation, and long-term investment. The discussion will focus on systemic solutions to reduce regulatory barriers and strengthen the competitiveness of the Polish economy in the face of growing international competition.

Transparency vs. Distrust: How Can the Polish Government and the Business Community Communicate Effectively?

A strong and competitive economy requires a partnership between the public sector and the business community, based on mutual trust, transparency, and predictable rules. In practice, dialogue between the two sides is often hampered by communication barriers, cumbersome procedures, unclear regulations, and differing perspectives and goals. How can we build relationships that foster joint efforts to address economic challenges? How can we increase the transparency of decision-making processes and create sustainable mechanisms for dialogue between the public and private sectors? The debate will focus on best practices for cooperation and solutions that strengthen trust, competitiveness, and the resilience of the Polish economy.

From history to entrepreneurship. How can we teach young people to be proactive?

Poland's economic transformation has unleashed a tremendous energy of entrepreneurship and individual initiative. Today's twenty-somethings are growing up in a country that is incomparably wealthier, more open and offering far more opportunities than Poland in the early 1990s. Paradoxically, however, this does not translate into a high level of entrepreneurial activity among the younger generation. Where does this gap between opportunities and the willingness to act come from? Can entrepreneurship be taught? And what exactly should we be teaching young people: economics, risk-taking, responsibility, independence – or, above all, a sense of agency?

Our New Human**Strength from nature. How to regain balance in a world of constant haste**

In a world of constant rush, digital overload, and the pressure to succeed, more and more people are experiencing emotional burnout, loneliness, and difficulty maintaining mental balance. This panel will explore why our brains are overloaded and what methods can help build mental resilience, social connections, and the ability to recharge through contact with nature, movement, experience, and reflection. We'll address the following questions: What methods help us regain agency and mindfulness in our daily lives? Can nature act as an "emotional regulation system"? Do education and personal development have to take place exclusively in classrooms and online? How can we create daily well-being rituals without "escaping from life"?

Why Are We Doing All This? A Panel on the Meaning of Life

Amid the daily rush of events and the constant stream of images from 24/7 media and social media, it's worth pausing to ask one question: What is the meaning of life?

The school of tomorrow: what kind of education do Poland and Europe need?

In the face of rapid technological, demographic, and social changes, modern education systems are challenged not only to impart knowledge but also to prepare young people for the future of work and life in a complex world. In the European Union, only about 55% of people aged 16–74 possessed at least basic digital skills, and disparities between countries and social groups remain significant—ranging from 83% in the Netherlands to 28% in Romania. On the other hand, over 44% of the population aged 25–34 in the European Union already holds a higher education degree. The debate will bring together experts, policymakers, and practitioners to reflect on key questions: how can curricula be modernized to develop the competencies of the future? How can we level the playing field in education across regions and social groups? And finally, how

can we build coherent education policies that align Poland's aspirations with the ambitions of the European Education Area, focusing on innovation, resilience, and inclusivity?

The "Z" Generation in Our New World

Health in Motion: How does physical activity strengthen society and the healthcare system?

Physical activity is one of the most effective tools for preventive healthcare—it reduces the risk of chronic diseases, improves mental well-being, and tangibly reduces the workload on healthcare systems. Meanwhile, according to EU research, a significant proportion of Europeans, including Poles, do not get enough exercise, which translates into rising healthcare costs and a decline in quality of life. Europe is investing in programs that support citizens' physical activity, and cities are developing infrastructure that encourages movement: bike paths, recreational spaces, and local sports initiatives. Poland is also making efforts to increase physical activity—from mass sports to promoting a healthy lifestyle in schools. The panel will demonstrate how physical activity can become one of the key pillars of public health and how investing in physical activity benefits society as a whole and the healthcare system.

Screens, Emotions, Education: How can we ensure the mental well-being of children and adolescents?

The mental health crisis among young people is becoming one of the most serious social challenges facing Europe today. Addiction to smartphones and social media, the pressure to compare oneself to others, sensory overload, and a lack of systemic support in schools create a combination that significantly impacts the emotional development of children and teenagers. During the debate, we will explore how schools, parents, local governments, and the state can work together to build an environment conducive to mental well-being—from digital education, through regulations and prevention, to access to specialists. We will also discuss how to restore space for young people to build relationships, rest, and grow up healthily in a world dominated by screens.

Citizens' Health as Europe's Capital: Challenges and Strategies for Resilience

The health of societies is increasingly becoming one of Europe's key development resources—a prerequisite for economic competitiveness, social cohesion, and demographic stability. The debate will focus on the challenges facing European health care systems: an aging population, growing mental health issues, increasing inequalities in access to care, and financial pressure on public systems. The discussion will draw on European strategies and initiatives aimed at building resilience—the development of preventive care, investments in medical innovation and

digitalization, strengthening citizens' health literacy, and better coordination of policies at the EU level. The discussion will focus on how to view health not as a cost, but as a long-term investment in Europe's future.

Sports That Build Character: Why Poland Needs More Than One Sport

A strong national sports culture does not arise solely around one or two of the most popular sports. Sports such as hockey, handball, and winter sports are becoming increasingly important; they not only generate excitement and foster local communities but also shape the attitudes of young people, promote physical activity, and strengthen social capital. However, the development of less popular sports requires a long-term strategy—one that includes youth training, access to sports infrastructure, and stable funding models. What role should the national government, local governments, and the business sector play in building a diverse sports culture? During the debate, we will discuss investments in local sports facilities, promoting physical activity among children and youth, and how to support sports that can become an important element of Poland's image and social development.

The 21st-Century Father

Contemporary fatherhood is changing faster than ever before. More and more men are looking for ways to build a deep relationship with their child, provide emotional support, and share experiences away from screens. In this panel discussion, we will try to define who the 21st-century father is and how fathers can regain confidence in their parenting role. We'll explore how we can support modern fatherhood through shared experiences, action, and building trust.

Half a Century of Research on Global Value Transformation Processes—An Optimistic Outlook?

How can you live without going mad?

Who doesn't ask themselves this question? Yet we usually do so quietly, between meetings, whilst looking at our packed diaries, when the sense of purpose gets lost under the pressure. We live in an age where productivity has become a virtue, mental resilience a requirement of the labour market, and fatigue a condition so commonplace that we've stopped noticing it. During this panel discussion, we'll examine what happens to a person living under prolonged pressure, and where ambition ends and a crisis begins. We will ask whether burnout is a problem of the individual or the system, why the question 'what's the point of it all?' arises sooner than ever before, and how to make career decisions that will bring joy and energise us. This is a conversation not about self-help formulas, but about real choices – for everyone who wants to do more than just get through another quarter.

Humans, Values, and AI. A Presentation of the Principles of Pope Leo XIV's Encyclical "Magnifica Humanitas"

NIGHT OWLS' CONVERSATION:

A conversation with Ewa Ewart about the film "Until the Last Breath" (TBC)

Moderation: Jakub Wiech, journalist (TBC)

To understand men - a meeting with Maciej Witucki

Prof. Magdalena Środa and Prof. Michał Rusinek

Tomasz Szlendak

EFNI TALKS:

History in the Age of Fake News. Why Is the Truth Becoming Increasingly Valuable?

Maciej Siembieda's work shows that history is not a closed chapter, but a force that continually influences contemporary politics, government decisions, and public attitudes. Drawing on many years of journalistic experience and historical investigations, the author sheds light on lesser-known events and their consequences for today's Europe. The event will be an opportunity to discuss how the past helps us better understand the present and the challenges of the future.

Political scenarios for Poland

The Polish political scene is entering a period of profound change, the consequences of which will shape the country's future direction and its position in Europe. What scenarios lie ahead for Polish politics? What challenges lie ahead for political parties, institutions and society in the coming years? In conversation with Professor Antoni Dudek, we will examine contemporary politics from the perspective of a historian and political scientist, analysing possible directions of change and their consequences for the state and its citizens.

How do Russians think? Between empire, propaganda and everyday life

The starting point for the discussion will be Krystyna Kurczab-Redlich's latest book, *Wowa, Volodya, Vladimir: The Secrets of Putin's Russia*, in which the author – drawing on her many years of experience as a journalist – analyses the origins of Putinism, the mindset of Russian society and the mechanisms shaping modern Russia.

More than just demographics. How can we win the race for future generations?

How can we address one of the greatest challenges facing Poland and Europe today, namely the demographic crisis? In an interview with Minister Aleksandra Gajewska, we will discuss the modern family, the challenges of parenthood, and how the state can effectively support pro-family policies and create conditions that encourage people to decide to have children.

Beyond the comfort zone. About a sport that changes lives

How does sport shape character, teach perseverance and help build mental resilience? In conversation with Aleksandra Mirośław, we'll discuss the role of physical activity in the lives of children and young people, the motivation to take on challenges, and how passion, consistency and belief in one's own abilities help us achieve our goals – not only in sport, but also in life.

"Polish attitudes towards Ukraine - enlargement, reconstruction, economic cooperation"

A presentation of the latest opinion poll by Prof. Dominika Maison for the Centre for International Relations.

The 'Męstwo' report - what do men in Poland think and say about themselves?

A presentation of the latest research findings from a study carried out by the New Community Foundation and the PZU Foundation, by Wawrzyniec Smoczyński (TBC)

Can the climate crisis still be halted?

Climate change is no longer a challenge for the future – it is already affecting the economy, security, agriculture, health and quality of life. In our conversation with Prof. Zbigniew Karaczun, we will discuss how to prepare Poland and Europe for the effects of the climate crisis, and how to reconcile economic development with environmental protection.

How can we boost the competitiveness of Polish companies in foreign markets?

Ambitions to expand beyond Poland are growing, but so are the barriers. How can Polish companies be made to compete more effectively in global markets and harness their potential for further growth? The discussion will be prompted by the findings of a report prepared by the Citi Handlowy Foundation in collaboration with the Centre for Strategic Thought. The experts invited to the discussion will talk about the key challenges and opportunities associated with the international expansion of Polish companies – from access to capital and new technologies to skills and institutional support. Together, they will consider – or perhaps disagree on – what measures could strengthen the position of Polish business on the international stage. The Citi Handlowy Foundation invites you to attend the session and, beforehand, to take part in a survey, which will be available on LinkedIn and via the EFNI app.

New Dimensions of Security. How Can Europe Build Resilience Against Mounting Threats?

Europe is facing increasingly complex threats today. The war in Ukraine, geopolitical tensions in Europe's immediate vicinity, cyberattacks, disinformation, migration pressures, and growing economic competition mean that security can no longer be understood solely as a military issue. How should European security policy change? How can nations and societies build greater resilience to crises and unpredictable events? Is Europe sufficiently prepared for a world in which threats emerge simultaneously from many directions? Experts from across Europe will discuss how to strengthen European resilience, cooperation, and the ability to respond to new challenges.

Poland in the EU: models of regional presence as a counter-narrative

Remaining in the EU is not the default scenario—it is a choice that must be actively shaped. The panel brings together four perspectives from four different models of regional presence in Brussels: The Spanish model (a delegation from an autonomous region), the German model (a joint office of two Baltic states), the Swedish model (a dedicated regional office on the Baltic coast), and the Finnish model (a consortium office of the capital region with partners). Each has found its own way to translate EU membership into tangible resources back home. The panel's question: Which of these models can Pomerania draw upon?

What Poland Can Learn from Those Who Have Left the EU?

After twenty years of membership, the question of the value of Poland's continued presence in the European Union regularly resurfaces. This panel brings together three perspectives from outside Poland—from Scotland, from a Scottish institution in Brussels that closed following Brexit,

and from Hungary—and complements them with an experienced Polish voice from the European Parliament. The common conclusion: the real cost of leaving the EU only becomes apparent after the exit, and by then it is too late to make corrections. What disappears overnight after leaving the European Union—in terms of institutions, market access, and regional policy? What cannot be regained after losing access to the internal market—in economic, demographic, and social terms? What does the relationship between the EU and a peripheral region (Scotland) and between the EU and a member state on the brink of conflict (Hungary) look like today from the perspective of the year 2026? What can Poland—a country still within the EU—do today to avoid the path that others have already taken?

The Space Industry – A New Engine for the Economy

The space industry is no longer the exclusive preserve of government agencies and scientists – it is becoming one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy and a source of groundbreaking innovation. Satellite technologies, Earth observation, communications, navigation and data analysis are now used in almost every industry, enhancing the competitiveness, security and resilience of economies. How can Europe compete more effectively with the US and China in the race for space technologies? What role can Poland, its domestic companies and research centres play in building a European space ecosystem? During the debate, we will discuss investment, collaboration between business and academia, and how the space industry can become one of the new drivers of Europe's economic growth.

LECTURES:

- Anna Rulkiewicz, President, LUX MED Group
- Patrycja Sasnal, Senior Professorial Fellow, European Neighborhood Chair, College of Europe, Natolin
- Prof. Michał Rusinek, writer, literary scholar
- Prof. Barbara Mróz-Gorgoń, Government Plenipotentiary for the 'Poland' brand
- Natalia Hatańska, CEO and Founder, Infuture Institute
- Radosław Nielek, director, NASK (TBC)

AUTHORS MEETINGS:

- Jacek Dubois, Igor Tuleya, discussion on the book "I Could Have Remained Silent"
- Prof. Grzegorz Kołodko, former Deputy Prime Minister of Poland and Minister of Finance, "Trump 2.0"
- Marek Magierowski, "Undiplomatically"
- Prof. Erik Angner, a discussion on the book How Economics Can Save the World

- Pierre Buhler, a discussion on the book Poland: A History of Ambition – How to Understand the Polish Moment
- Yascha Mounk, a discussion on the book The Identity Trap
- Katarzyna Wojnicka, a discussion on the book Mężczyznologia
- Eugeniusz Smolar, a discussion on the book Chaos without an Alliance: Poland and Europe Facing the Ruins of the Old World
- Marianna Kupść, a discussion on the book The Illusion of Control: Who Decides What You Buy
- Zbigniew Parafianowicz, "The Problem with Zelensky" (TBC)
- Natalia Hatańska (TBC)