



5-6 November 2025, Aachen Program

The program is subject to change.

Freedom of Research (FoR) – A European Summit 2025 *Europe in Times of Division*

Our freedom and democracy are under threat. Our Summit serves as a place for reflection and foresight. We aim to bring together people from various backgrounds from all across Europe, fostering connections with thought leaders, and addressing pressing issues that will define Europe's future.

Freedom, in all its dimensions, is a core European value and right. The freedom of research is vital for fostering innovation, expanding knowledge, and securing Europe's future in times of division. Today, our continent faces complex challenges – ranging from political polarization and geopolitical tensions to economic disparities and environmental divides. How can we navigate these challenges and create a resilient framework for future developments?

Festive Evening Event

5 November, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM, Coronation Hall, Aachen Town Hall
Languages: English and German (with live interpretation)

Welcome Remarks:

- Prof. Dr. Ulrich Rüdiger, Rector, RWTH Aachen University
- Prof. Dr. Thomas Prefi, Chairman of the Charlemagne Prize Foundation

Keynote: Roger de Weck, Bestselling Author, Publicist and Manager, former Director General of Swiss Broadcasting Corp. and Editor-in-Chief of the German weekly «Die Zeit»

Awarding of Scholarships: Fellows 2025/26 of the Charlemagne Prize Academy

Music: Carbon Ensemble, Collegium Musicum, RWTH Aachen University

Moderation: Dr. Angela Maas, Journalist and Moderator, Deputy Spokeswoman of the Executive Board of the Charlemagne Prize Foundation

Symposium

6 November, 9:30 AM – 5:30 PM Generali-Saal, SuperC, RWTH Aachen University

Language: English

9:30–9:45 | Words of Welcome:

- Prof. Dr. Thomas Prefi, Chairman of the Charlemagne Prize Foundation
- Prof. Dr. Gabriele Gramelsberger and Prof. Dr. Stefan Bösch, Directors, Käte Hamburger Kolleg: Cultures of Research (c:o/re)

9:45–10:05 | Opening Keynote

Prof. Dr. Maria Leptin, President of the European Research Council

BLOCK I: BRIDGING KNOWLEDGE & POWER

10:05–11:05 | Panel Discussion

Freedom under Pressure: Funding as a Political Weapon

- Moderation: Dr. Toon van Overbeke, Charlemagne Prize Fellow 2024/25 and Assistant Professor at Maastricht University
- Erica Lutes, Head of Fulbright Commission Brussels
- Prof. Dr. Maria Leptin, President of the European Research Council
- Caroline de Gruyter, European Affairs Correspondent and Columnist, NRC Handelsblad

11:05–11:15 | Coffee Break

11:15–11:45 | TedTalk Session Part 1

Influencing Credibility: Opening the Black Box of Trust

- Dr. Dr. René von Schomberg, Technical University of Darmstadt

12:00–13:00 | Lunch Break

13:00–13:30 | TedTalk Session Part 2

Influencing Credibility: Opening the Black Box of Trust

- Eva Coringrato (Senior Analyst) and Daniela Rodriguez-Rincon (research leader), RAND Europe (tbc)
- Prof. Dr. Sahana Udupa, LMU München

13:30–14:30 | Panel Discussion

Dialogue between Citizens, Science, and Policy: Rethinking EU Enlargement

- Moderation: Sophia Beiter, Research Associate, Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM)
- Prof. Dr. Giselle Bosse, Full Professor and Chair in EU External Democracy Support, Maastricht University
- Dr. Giulio Venneri, Deputy Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST), European Commission

14:30–14:45 | Coffee Break

BLOCK II: BRIDGING INTERESTS & IDEALS

14:45–15:30 | Conversation

Freedom or Fragmentation: Does EU Tech Law Dilute Europe's Voice?

- Moderation: tbd
- Iris Plöger, Member of the Executive Board, Federation of German Industries / BDI e. V.
- Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Lippert, Director of Jülich Supercomputing Centre (tbc)
- Taavet Hinrikus, Co-founder and CEO, Wise (tbc)
- María Pilar del Castillo Vera, MEP, European People's Party (tbc)

15:30–16:30 | Panel Discussion

Spaces of Unity in Divided Times? Freedom and Fragmentation in Urban Strategy

- Moderation: Dr. Ali Abdelshafy, Charlemagne Prize Fellow 2024/25 and Assistant Professor in Future Industrial Systems at TU Delft
- Prof. Dr. Cornelia Redeker, Professor in Architecture and Head of Umeå University School of Architecture, Member of the New European Bauhaus Facility Experts Group
- Patrick Child, Deputy Director-General of DG Environment, European Commission, and EU Mission Manager for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities
- Valentino Tignanelli, Architect, Designer and Project Manager at Aaltosiilo Ry and Factum Foundation in Oulu, Finland

BLOCK III: BRIDGING SCIENCE & SOCIETY

16:45–17:30 | Conversation (and Snacks)

The Power of European Freedom: Unlocking Research and Innovation Globally

- Moderation: Santiago Ardisson, Researcher in International Law and International Affairs, University of London
- Boris Walbaum, Founder and President of Forward College
- Walter Zampieri, Head of Unit for Cultural Policy, DG Education and Culture, European Commission

Stand-up FoR Science NIGHT

6 November, Apollo Kino & Bar, Aachen

Unless stated otherwise, this part of the program will be conducted in German.

18:30–19:30:

Block #1 A: Opening & Slam

Cinema 1

Moderation: Simon Middelkoop

Slammers tbc

Block #1 B: Reading & Discussion

Cinema 3

Program tbc

19:45–20:45:

Block #2 A: Late Night Talks

Theater with stage

Moderation: Luca Swieter

Music: RWTH Big Band

- Maria Clara Groppler, Comedian
- Maximilian Doeckel and Jonathan Focke, Podcast Quarks Science Cops

Block #2 B: Reading & Discussion (in English)

Cinema 3

- Dr Hannah Pool, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Author of the book “The Game: The Economy of Undocumented Migration from Afghanistan to Europe”
- Dr Alina Marktanner, Modern History and its Cultures of Knowledge and Technology, RWTH Aachen University

From 21:00:

Block #3 A: Film screening of “Matrix”

Cinema 1

Block #3 B: Film screening of “Barbie” (OmU)

Cinema 2