Brussels
2026

EUROPEAN IDEAS FORUM



PROGRAMME

The European Moment

Shaping the EU's Role and Power in a Rebalanced World

DoubleTree by Hilton
Rue Gineste 3, 1210 Brussels

This event receives financial support from the European Parliament.
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Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies

8 DECEMBER 2026

12:30-14:00
Registrations and Networking Lunch

14:00-14:30
Presentation of the Forum
Mikuláš Dzurinda
President, Martens Centre

Opening Address
European Annual Address: What We Stand For

Manfred Weber
EPP President and EPP Group Chairman

14:30-15:00
Keynote Speech
Why Europe Matters: Freedom, Democracy and Prosperity in a Changing World

Roberta Metsola
European Parliament President

15:00-15:45
Panel 1
Europe's Awakening: From Market Pull to Geopolitical Power

Turning Europe's economic weight into geopolitical power requires closer coordination of trade, investment, diplomacy and security. The discussion will explore how EU tools can strengthen Europe's global influence, which dependencies on China must be reduced to safeguard economic security, and how Europe can play a stronger role in the Middle East. It will also consider how enlargement can advance geopolitical goals, and which internal reforms, partnerships and political trade-offs are needed for more coherent European action.

15:45-17:00
One-on-One Interviews
With business leaders

17:00-17:15 Coffee Break

17:15-17:45
Policy Dialogue
Defending Europe: Building the Defence Union for a New Era

Andrius Kubilius
Commissioner for Defence and Space

Moderator:
Tomi Huhtanen
Executive Director, Martens Centre

17:45-18:30
Panel 2
Unlocking Europe's Demographic Potential: Entrepreneurship, Employment and Social Fairness

Europe's demographic future raises pressing questions about employment, entrepreneurship and fairness across generations. The discussion will explore how labour market opportunities, housing, care and family policies can help younger people find stable work, start businesses and build families. It will also consider how older workers, lifelong learning and the effective integration of migrants can strengthen skills and competitiveness, while asking how Europe can promote social mobility, sustain solidarity and reward initiative at every stage of life.

18:30-19:00
Interview
Future-Proofing Europe: Resilience, Technology and Economic Security

Henna Virkkunen
European Commission Executive Vice President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy

Moderator:
Dimitar Lilkov
Senior Research Officer, Martens Centre

19:00 Networking Cocktail Reception

9 DECEMBER 2026

09:15-10:00
Registrations and Breakfast

10:00-11:00
Panel 3
New Alliances, New Rules: Governing a Changing World

Effective global governance depends on cooperation among countries with competing interests and different approaches to international rules. Trade and artificial intelligence will frame a discussion of how Europe can build partnerships with established allies and emerging powers, and when multilateral agreements or smaller coalitions offer the best way forward. Key questions include how regulation can support cooperation, where Europe should defend its principles or seek compromise, and how international institutions can give partners a stronger stake in shared solutions.

11:00-12:30
One-on-One Interviews
With business leaders

12:30-14:00 Walking Lunch

14:00-14:30
Policy Dialogue
Building Europe's Mediterranean Future

Dubravka Šuica
Commissioner for the Mediterranean

Moderator:
Peter Hefele
Policy Director, Martens Centre

14:30-15:30
Panel in Media Partnership with The Economist Enterprise
Realising Europe's Potential: Competitiveness, Innovation and Lasting Growth

Turning Europe's competitiveness ambitions into innovation and lasting growth requires clear reform and investment priorities. Building on the Draghi agenda, the discussion will explore which Single Market reforms should come first, how AI can raise productivity, and how industrial policy can support innovation while preserving competition. It will also consider how the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and deeper capital markets can mobilise investment, how responsibilities should be shared across European, national and regional levels, and how progress should be measured.

15:30-16:00
Fireside Chat
How the EU can Survive in a World of Predators

Klaus Welle
Chairman of the Martens Centre Academic Council and former Secretary General of the European Parliament

Moderator:
Margherita Movarelli
Head of Communications and Marketing, Martens Centre

Followed by Closing Drinks

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