

Centre for European Transformation

Annual Conference 2026

Financing European Sovereignty

Thursday, 12 March 2026, 13:00 – 18:30

Frankfurt School of Finance & Management
Adickesallee 32-34, 60322 Frankfurt am Main

Please note: Times and speakers listed are indicative and may be subject to change.

This year's conference shifts from potential to execution – mobilizing private and public capital to strengthen Europe's defence industrial base and secure a sustainable, autonomous energy future. The agenda focuses on practical solutions for bridging investment gaps, building cross-sector partnerships, and coordinating industrial and financial action in these two interconnected areas. Participants will explore how strategic funding can modernize defence manufacturing, accelerate dual-use innovation, and drive the clean energy transition that underpins Europe's long-term security and competitiveness.

Conference Moderator:

- *Carolin Roth* (International business journalist, freelance presenter, and reporter)

13:00

Registration (30min)

13:30

Welcome Address (5min)

- *Prof. Dr. Nils Stieglitz* (President & CEO, Frankfurt School)

13:35

Transformation Compass Launch (10min)

- *Prof. Dr. Sascha Steffen* (Co-Centre Director, Centre for European Transformation)
- *Prof. Dr. Eckart Windhagen* (Co-Centre Director, Centre for European Transformation)

13:45

Keynote Impulse (10 min)

- *TBA*

13:55

Fireside Chat (15min)

- *Martin Blessing* (German Commissioner for Foreign Investment, Chairman Danske Bank)
- *Prof. Dr. Eckart Windhagen* (Co-Centre Director, Centre for European Transformation)

14:10

Opening Panel: (45min)

Europe's Economic Security in a Fragmenting World: Competitiveness, Capital, and Strategic Autonomy: This panel will explore how Europe can strengthen economic security and competitiveness amid geopolitical fragmentation and rising strategic dependencies. Panellists will examine how public and private capital alongside effective EU policy and regulatory frameworks, can drive productivity, innovation, and industrial leadership while preserving openness and trust in the single market. The discussion will highlight key trade-offs between resilience and interdependence and how Europe can sustain investor confidence and global influence in an increasingly volatile environment.

- *Nicola Beer* (Vice-President, European Investment Bank)
- *Martin Blessing* (German Commissioner for Foreign Investment, Chairman Danske Bank)
- *Sven Smit* (Chair of McKinsey Global Institute)
- *Vincenzo Vedda* (Global Chief Investment Officer, DWS)

14:55

Coffee Break (30min)

15:25

Focus Session 1: (45min)

Defence, Security & Crisis Preparedness: This session will focus on Europe's defence industrial base as a core security priority and a strategic investment opportunity. The discussion will address financing gaps in modernising defence manufacturing, scaling technological capabilities, and advancing dual-use innovation. Panellists will explore how better coordination of public and private capital can strengthen crisis preparedness, close capability gaps, and support Europe's broader resilience and technological sovereignty agenda.

Impulse (TBA)

Speakers:

- *David Chinn* (Partner McKinsey Israel, co-leader European Defence Mission)
- *Susanne Wiegand* (Former CEO of Renk)
- *TBA*

16:10

Keynote Talk (20 min)

- *TBA*

16:30

Focus Session 2: (45min)

Energy Security & Transition: This panel will examine how strategic investment can reinforce Europe's energy security while accelerating the transition to a resilient, net-zero energy system. Panellists will discuss financing needs for modernising infrastructure, scaling renewable and low-carbon solutions, and reducing strategic dependencies. The session will highlight how aligned public and private capital can enhance system resilience, competitiveness, and Europe's long-term economic security.

Impulse (TBA)

Speakers:

- *Dr. Lutz-Christian Funke* (Secretary General of KfW Group)
- *Julia Giese* (Principal on European Infrastructure, KKR)
- *Dr. Georg Stamatelopoulos* (CEO of EnBW)

17:15

Closing Remarks (15min)

- *Carolyn Roth* (International business journalist, freelance presenter, and reporter)
- *Prof. Dr. Sascha Steffen* (Centre Director, Centre for European Transformation)

17:30

Get-Together (1hr)

The event will conclude with an exclusive networking get-together - a great opportunity to connect with peers and industry leaders!