



Press release, 21 April 2026

“Disrupted Age”: 55th St. Gallen Symposium explores global upheavals

The world is undergoing a period of profound change: politically, technologically and socially. These topics will be addressed at the 55th St. Gallen Symposium, organised by students at the University of St.Gallen. On 6 and 7 May 2026, the conference will bring together international decision-makers, University experts and young talent on campus and in the city of St.Gallen to discuss the primary changes of our time under the motto “Disrupted Age”.

Presidents, Federal Councillors, activists, Nobel laureates, managers and entrepreneurs – for over 50 years, the St. Gallen Symposium has been bringing distinguished guests to St.Gallen to address global challenges and to foster dialogue between generations. This exchange is becoming increasingly important, particularly in a “Disrupted Age”, where established certainties are being challenged and decision-making processes are taken place amid uncertainty. The Symposium sees itself not merely as a platform for analysis, but as a venue where concrete courses of action are discussed. From securing global supply chains to shaping future models of innovation and society.

Many leading figures will once again be guests on the St.Gallen campus in May to discuss issues with students from all over the world. “Our aim is to challenge established perspectives with new ideas and, in doing so, capture the spirit of our times. We want to develop solutions together for an increasingly complex world,” says University of St.Gallen student Lena-Sophie Vogt. The co-president of the International Students’ Committee (ISC) is organising this year’s conference together with around 30 students from the University of St.Gallen.

Geopolitical, demographic and technological challenges

A glance at the programme reveals the thematic breadth and topicality of the debates, accompanied by exclusive research findings. Panel discussions will include a focus on subjects such as “Trade, Tariffs, and the Future of Globalisation” and “The Cost of Money: Europe’s Markets in a New Monetary Era”. They will be complemented by discussions on digital sovereignty, geopolitical fault lines in the Middle East, and the future of transatlantic relations. Interactive formats address questions such as “The New Geometry of Power” or the ethical limits of technological progress. Numerous CEOs, executives from SMI, DAX and multinational companies, as well as a good dozen governments from around the world, will gather in St.Gallen for the conference.

Speakers for 2026 include:

- [Karin Keller-Sutter](#), Federal Councillor & Head of the Federal Department of Finance, Switzerland
- [Emma Theofelus](#), Minister of Information, Communication and Technology, Namibia
- [Nicolas Peter](#), Chairman of the Supervisory Board, BMW
- [Sergio P. Ermotti](#), Group CEO & Chairman of the Executive Board, UBS AG
- [Hanneke Faber](#), CEO of Logitech
- [Philipp Navratil](#), CEO of Nestlé
- [Thomas Schinecker](#), CEO of the Roche Group
- [Mirjana Spoljaric Egger](#), President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- [Khaled El-Enany](#), Director-General, UNESCO
- [Andres Sutt](#), Minister for Energy and the Environment, Estonia
- [Ivan Krastev](#), Hungarian political scientist and policy advisor
- [Peter Sloterdijk](#), German philosopher and writer



Former students from 2026 to attend as “Leaders of Today”

These young talents qualify to participate in the Symposium via a global essay competition. This year, participants in the [Global Essay Competition](#) addressed the question: “Technology, politics and demographics in flux: what happens when these forces collide? And what can minimise the risks?” The essay competition attracted an exceptionally high number of entries from young people around the world; the [top 25 essays](#) can already be read here. Time and again, winners of this competition and members of the conference organising team go on to achieve remarkable things: take Philipp Navratil, for example, who was a member of the Student Committee in 1998 and is now a guest speaker in his capacity as CEO of Nestlé.

Other former participants are also influencing international debates and returning to St. Gallen in new roles: These include Martin Blessing, Germany’s Investment Commissioner and former member of the ISC team; Jagdish Karel, who has taken on political responsibility in Nepal; and Emma Theofelus, Namibia’s Minister for Information and Communication Technology. These individuals' careers demonstrate how 'Leaders of Tomorrow' are becoming the influential voices of today.

University of St.Gallen perspectives on the theme “Age of Upheaval”

The University of St.Gallen is also contributing its academic perspective to the debates: researchers such as [Tomas Casas Klett](#) (geopolitics and China), [Leena Grover](#) (human rights), [Oliver Gassmann](#) (innovation), [Damian Borth](#) (AI and technology), [Claudia Brühwiler](#) (USA), [Dietmar Grichnik](#) (Entrepreneurship), [Eri Bertso](#) (Democracy and Politics) or [Sebastian Kernbach](#) (Leadership) provide insights into questions relating to the conference theme. Their contributions combine academic research with practical experience from business and politics, enriching international discussions with a well-founded, interdisciplinary perspective. In this way, the University of St.Gallen contributes to making sense of complex global developments.

“St. Gallen Symposium in Town”: Public programme in St.Gallen’s pubs

From 3 to 7 May 2026, “[SGS in Town](#)” will once again bring international guests together with the city’s residents. A total of seven events will take place in cafés and pubs in the old town, including a concert and a visit to the St.Gallen Abbey Archives. Panellists will include:

- [Barbara Bleisch](#), presenter, SRF Sternstunde Philosophie
- [Richard David Precht](#), German philosopher and author
- [Wolfram Eilenberger](#), writer, philosopher & presenter
- [Annette Kehnel](#), historian & Ria&Arthur Dietschweiler Fellow at the St.Gallen Collegium
- [Manfred Lütz](#), psychiatrist & theologian
- [Michael Rauchenstein](#), News Anchor, SRF
- [Benedetta Berti](#), Secretary General of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly

“With the St. Gallen Symposium and the public programme in the city, we are positioning St.Gallen as a global hub for dialogue with a diversity of international perspectives,” says Dr Gunnar Hauptmann, programme director and designated managing director of the St. Gallen Symposium. The events in the city encourage social exchange in an inspiring atmosphere. Advance [online registration](#) for “St. Gallen Symposium in Town” is recommended.

Contact for media enquiries and accreditation:

Dr Frauke Kops, Head of Marketing and Operations, St. Gallen Symposium
+41 71 227 20 20, press@symposium.org

You can find the latest details on the website regarding the [programme](#) and all [speakers](#).



St. Gallen Symposium

The St. Gallen Symposium is one of the world's leading initiatives for intergenerational dialogue. It facilitates open exchange between current leaders from politics, business, and society and the next generation. The Symposium aims to promote responsible and forward-looking decisions. Founded in 1969 by students, the Symposium brings together around 1,000 participants from more than 80 nations in St.Gallen each year. Through additional impact projects, the St. Gallen Symposium strengthens sustainable thinking and intergenerational responsibility. The University Archives of St.Gallen also makes the [history of the St. Gallen Symposium](#) accessible digitally. Anyone interested in learning how Kofi Annan, Muhammad Yunus, Mario Vargas Llosa, or politicians such as Helmut Schmidt, Christine Lagarde, Romano Prodi, Mary Robinson, or Lubna Khalid al-Qasimi spoke and debated in St.Gallen can now access an extensive collection of [documents, images, and audio and video recordings](#) from the period between 1970 and 2010. – Visit: symposium.org

University of St.Gallen (HSG)

The University of St.Gallen (HSG) is the university of the Canton of St.Gallen and Switzerland's business university. Internationality, practical relevance and an integrative view have characterised education at HSG ever since its establishment in 1898. Today, the University educates around 10,000 students from approx. 120 countries in Business Administration, Economics, Law and Social Sciences, International Affairs and Computer Science. With success: HSG is among Europe's leading business universities. In the 2025 Financial Times European Business School Rankings, HSG is in the top ten, occupying 8th place. In 2025, the FT ranked the Master's programme in Strategy and International Management (SIM-HSG) as the best worldwide for the fourteenth time in its annual ranking of Master's programmes in Management. Its integrative education at the highest academic level earned the international seals of approval of the EQUIS, AACSB and AMBA accreditations. Students are able to obtain degrees at the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral/Ph.D. Levels. In addition, HSG provides first-class and extensive executive education courses for more than 6,000 participants per annum. The focal points of research at HSG are its approx. 40 institutes, research centres and Centers, which constitute an integral part of the University. The institutes, which are largely organised autonomously, are self-funding to a great extent but are still closely linked with the University operations. Visit us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Youtube](#), [Instagram](#) and unisg.ch:

