The Leaders Collaboration Forum 2026

THURSDAY, October 15, 2026

13.00 – 14.00 Exhibition | Coffee, Founders & Solutions: RESPOND Urban & Energy Startups

14.00 – 14.15 Opening | Board of Directors of the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt

14.15 – 14.30 Keynote | Setting the Course: A Shared Vision for the Future

A political keynote setting out a vision for Europe's future. It explores how Europe can secure long-term prosperity, strengthen its global role, and align economic strength with social cohesion. It outlines the hard choices needed to make that vision a reality.

- Charles **MICHEL**, President Emeritus of the European Council and Former Prime Minister of Belgium

14.30 – 14.55 Fireside Chat | From Vision to Reality

A conversation on the political choices needed to turn Europe's vision into reality.

- Charles **MICHEL**, President Emeritus of the European Council and Former Prime Minister of Belgium
- Lars-Hendrik **RÖLLER**, Professor of Economics at ESMT Berlin and Founder and Chairman of the Berlin Global Dialogue.

14.55 – 15.40 Panel | Not in My Backyard: Can the Energy Transition Still Win Trust?

The energy transition is not only a technological and economic challenge but also a political and narrative one. As costs and trade-offs become more visible, public support is becoming decisive. Yet too often, the transition lacks a compelling common vision and is instead shaped by fragmented messages and competing narratives.

Panel

- Kerstin **ANDREAE**, Chair of the Executive Board, BDEW
- Selma **LOSSAU**, Chief Technical Officer (CTO), Netze BW
- Klaus **MÜLLER**, President, Bundesnetzagentur

15.40 – 15.50 Scientific Impulse | Energy Architecture: From Sectoral Gains to System Integration

The focus shifts from individual technologies to the broader question of how electrification, storage, hydrogen for hard-to-abate industry and baseload can work together in Europe's energy system to secure supply, maintain affordability and preserve industrial competitiveness.

- Reinhard **HÜTTL**, Managing Partner and Scientific Director, EEI

15.50 – 16.20 Panel | Beyond the Obvious: Gaps in the Energy Debate

Europe's energy debate often moves between two-time horizons: long-term bets on technologies such as small modular reactors and fusion, and the solutions that can be built and scaled today. Between them lie questions that receive far too little attention, and they may prove decisive for Europe's security, competitiveness and climate goals.

- Philipp **SCHRÖDER**, CEO, 1KOMMA5°
- Tinne **VAN DER STRAETEN**, CEO, WindEurope
- Leif Johan **SEVLAND**, President & CEO, ONS

16.20 – 16.50 Break

16.50 – 17.25 Panel | Where Transformation Becomes Tangible: Local Ecosystems as Europe's Competitive Edge

Europe has placed a historic bet: decarbonizing its industrial base while remaining competitive and technologically sovereign. The answers are already emerging from industrial sites and local ecosystems, where industry, startups, research institutions and public authorities collaborate to accelerate transformation, speed up deployment and bring new technologies into real-world use.

- Stefan **KOLEV**, Member, Scientific Advisory Council on Economic Policy, German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy
- Maike **LAMBARTH**, CO-Founder & CEO, Cyclize
- Jörgen **SANDSTRÖM**, Head of Industrial Transformation, World Economic Forum

17.25 – 18.25 Solution Showcases | RESPOND Accelerator: Innovation in Practice

The transition towards a resilient, competitive, and net-zero future is already reshaping industrial systems, resource dependencies, and societal resilience. Through five RESPOND startup showcases, this session explores the defining tensions driving this transformation,

highlighting breakthrough technologies across energy, materials, buildings, cities, and carbon removal.

Moderated Conversation:

- Lubomila **JORDANOVA**, Founder, Plan A

Startup Pitches structured around five solution clusters:

1. Future Energy Systems
   - Felix **BÖHMER**, CEO, Factor2Energy
2. Critical Materials
   - Seadna **QUIGLEY**, CEO, Level Nine
3. Sustainable Built Environment
   - Sandra **GO**, CEO, Emissiv
4. Resilient Cities
   - Tiago **MARQUES**, CEO, greenmetrics.ai
5. Carbon Removal
   - Florian **BIRNER**, Managing Director, Planeteers

18.25 – 18.40 Conversation | Winning Together: Collaboration and Competitiveness

- Herbert **HAINER**, President FC Bayern München

18.40 – 20.30 Seated Dinner

20.30 – 23.00 Happy Hour & Networking incl. Jazz Band

FRIDAY, October 16, 2026

8.00 – 9.00 Exhibition | Coffee, Founders & Solutions: RESPOND Urban & Energy Startups

9.00 - 9.05 Opening Trailer

9.05 – 9.15 Keynote | The Human Layer: Judgment in the Age of AI

AI has gone from miracle to menace in the public mind. Fears about jobs are rising, communities are pushing back, and even AI's own builders are calling to slow down. Beneath the noise is a quieter and more urgent question: as AI agents take over more of our work, who is still making the call?

- Kevin **BAUER**, Professor for Game-Theoretic and Causal AI in Business and Economics, Goethe University Frankfurt

9.15 – 10.00 Panel | How AI is Changing Energy, Industry and Society

AI is becoming part of Europe's economic and physical infrastructure. It runs on electricity, grids, chips and water, and it is beginning to transform how energy systems, industry and cities operate. The opportunities are significant. At the same time, the rapid expansion of AI raises important questions about energy demand, local acceptance, security and accountability, and about how its benefits can be broadly shared.

Panel

- Kevin **BAUER**, Professor for Game-Theoretic and Causal AI in Business and Economics, Goethe University Frankfurt
- Kathrin **GÜNTHER**, CTO, TenneT Germany
- Philipp **JUSTUS**, Country Manager Germany and VP Central Europe, Google

10.00 – 10.50 Panel and Impulse | Scaling & Capital: Building Capacity and Financing Europe's Long-Term Growth

Long-term competitiveness depends on innovation, but innovation depends on the right capabilities, governance and financing. This session explores how public, private and catalytic capital can mobilize patient investment, build trust and create the conditions for long-term growth.

Impulse

- Jean-Christophe **LALOUX**, Director General, Head of EU Lending and Advisory Operations, EIB

Panel

- Tim **BÖLTKEN**, CEO, Ineratec
- Jean-Christophe **LALOUX**, Director General, Head of EU Lending and Advisory Operations, EIB
- Simona **PARAVANI-MELLINGHOFF**, Managing Director, Global CIO of Solutions, Multi-Asset Strategies and Solutions, BlackRock

10.50 – 11.50 Networking Break incl. Guided Startup & Innovations Tour

An interactive guided tour introducing the two cohorts of the RESPOND Accelerator and showcasing the startups behind breakthrough solutions for the energy transition and future urban development. (Tour-Start: 10:50)

11.50 – 12.50 Interactive Panel | The Dynamics of Societal Change

In Cooperation with Tagesspiegel

Society is undergoing profound change, driven by AI, the energy transition and geopolitical shifts. Yet lasting transformation depends not only on innovation, but also on trust and public support. As many people struggle with the pace and consequences of change, this conversation explores how society adapts and how support for necessary transformation can be built.

Moderated Conversation:

- Anja **WEHLER-SCHÖCK**, Member of the Editorial Board, Tagesspiegel

- Janina **MÜTZE**, co-founder and CEO of Civey
- Anna **HERRHAUSEN**, Board member Phineo

12.50 – 13.10 Closing Keynote | The Economics of Progress: Innovation, Competition, and Creative Destruction

- Philippe **AGHION**, Nobel Laureate in Economics 2025

13.10 – 13.20 Official Closing

13.20 – 14.30 Lunch