

PRESS RELEASE 04/2026

Public conference: Protecting Democracy – Strengthening Democracy

Berlin, 26 March 2026

Democracies around the world are increasingly under pressure – including Germany’s democracy. What can we do to protect it? At its annual conference on 17 June 2026 in Weimar the German Ethics Council will examine the pre-conditions of a thriving democracy. Registration opens today.

“We live in turbulent times,” Helmut Frister, Chair of the German Ethics Council, says. “The world order as we have known it for a long time seems to be falling apart. Whilst some are fighting for democratic participation and rights, for others democracy has lost its appeal. Yet it is a great treasure that enables us to enjoy freedom, participation and equality.”

“How important are these values to us?” Judith Simon asks. The Vice-Chair of the Council is the spokesperson for the conference’s organising committee. “Why do they no longer convince certain people? And what conditions do we need to maintain a strong democracy? We want to place these questions at the heart of our debate with our experts and the audience.”

The following topics will be covered:

- What do we understand by democracy today?
- What are the current threats to democratic systems?
- In what ways do developments in Germany differ from or relate to global phenomena?
- What lessons can be drawn from German history and from international experience?
- What role do society, politics and law, as well as the economy, media and emotions, play in the success and failure of democracies – and how does the crisis of democracy in turn affect these areas?
- What protective instruments and reform approaches exist to strengthen democratic structures?
- How can democracy be shaped to become resilient and future-proof?

Participants will not only be able to analyse and discuss democracy, but also test certain techniques in a number of workshops. A hands-on exhibition featuring initiatives and exhibitors will showcase the diversity of democratic education and civic engagement, inviting attendees to exchange ideas. Online audiences will also be able to participate in a variety of interactive ways.

About the conference

The annual conference is open to the public and free of charge. It will be held in German. To attend in person, registration is required. An online livestream is available without registration. For the hearing-impaired, simultaneous

Members

Prof. Dr. iur. Helmut Frister (Chair)
 Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Susanne Schreiber (Vice-Chair)
 Prof. Dr. phil. Judith Simon (Vice-Chair)
 Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. Eva Winkler (Vice-Chair)

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Jutta Allmendinger
 Prof. Dr. phil. Cornelia Betsch
 Prof. Dr. iur. Hans-Georg Dederer
 Dr. rer. nat. Uta Eser
 Prof. Dr. Aldo Faisal
 Military Bishop Dr. theol. Bernhard Felmberg
 Prof. Dr. rer. pol. Nils Goldschmidt
 Prof. Dr. theol. Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt
 Prof. Dr. med. Winfried Hardinghaus
 Dr. phil. Ute Kalender
 Hedy Kerek-Bodden
 Prof. Dr. phil. Armin Nassehi
 Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Annette Riedel
 Prof. Dr. iur. Dr. phil. Frauke Rostalski
 Prof. Dr. rer. soc. Dr. theol. Jochen Sautermeister
 Prof. Dr. theol. Kerstin Schlögl-Flierl
 Dr. med. Dr. h. c. Josef Schuster
 Prof. Dr. phil. Mark Schweda
 Prof. Dr. iur. Gregor Thüsing
 Prof. Dr. Achim Wambach

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transcription and sign language interpretation will be available both on-site and online.

Annual conference of the German Ethics Council

“Protecting Democracy – Strengthening Democracy”

Wednesday, 17 June 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

congress centrum weimarhalle, UNESCO-Platz 1, 99423 Weimar

Livestream: www.ethikrat.org/live

Registration: www.ethikrat.org/veranstaltungen/tagungen/anmeldung

Programme and workshops: www.ethikrat.org/veranstaltungen/tagungen/demokratie-schuetzen-demokratie-staerken