The International Students’ Committee is a student-driven initiative seeking to establish a platform for dialogue between generations. We believe that young people must have a responsibility, as well as a right, to take part in today’s decision making. For one year, thirty students invest all their heart, energy, and time contributing to the organisation of the St. Gallen Symposium.

The St. Gallen Symposium is more than a two-day conference. It is a meaningful contribution to an international debate about topics that matter.

We look forward to welcoming you in St. Gallen from 7-8 May 2020 to become part of our initiative and play a role in our dialogue across three generations of leaders.

Leonard Castritius, Marco Jost
and Maximilian Wörlein
Head of the Organising Committee
The St. Gallen Symposium is the world's leading initiative for intergenerational debates on economic, political, and social developments.

We bring together key decision makers, thought leaders, and brilliant young minds to address current challenges and opportunities on transforming ideas into action. We have fostered healthy debates and created an outstanding community for exchange since 1969.

We are a student-run initiative combining excellence with innovation: a unique and extraordinary experience.
To inspire and be inspired by the most important topics of our time and spark new ideas and solutions across generations, three generations of leaders from more than 90 nations meet in St. Gallen every year.
Communities

Every community contributes according to its own characteristics and experiences, as well as the common goal of inspiring other generations for future impact on business and society.

Senior Leaders

Senior Leaders at the St. Gallen Symposium represent companies, as well as political and academic institutions, from all over the world. They challenge younger generations on their ideas, are inspired by their questions and comments, and are at the heart of change.
Aspiring Leaders represent the corporate world as potential future executive decision makers or the entrepreneurial environment as founders. They pair experience with creativity and come up with practical ideas for transformation.

Leaders of Tomorrow are carefully selected brilliant young thinkers from around the world. They challenge the beliefs of all participants, spark ideas, and ignite actions. They are the drivers of transformation and change: invited either through the St. Gallen Global Essay Competition or through a nomination process.

“The Leaders of Tomorrow are not there to only listen to their elders; they are there to challenge staid orthodoxies, advance new ideas, and propel the global debate forward.”

Scott Young, Leader of Tomorrow Alumni

GLOBAL ESSAY COMPETITION SINCE 1989
The St. Gallen Global Essay Competition is the world’s most prestigious essay competition aimed at graduate students. It requires bright ideas, excellent writing skills, and a critical mind to impress the jury. The top 100 contributors are selected by an independent jury to attend the St. Gallen Symposium, while finalists take the symposium’s big stage to defend their ideas. Since 1989, about 800 students have taken part every year, contributing to an impressive pool of 30,000 bold ideas.
Past Speakers

Each year, a distinguished array of international personalities explores and develops views on present and long-term issues in business, politics, and society (affiliation when attended).

Martin Wolf, Chief Economics Commentator of the Financial Times

Heng Swee Keat, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance of Singapore

Dominic Barton, Global Managing Partner Emeritus of McKinsey & Company

Prof. Niall Ferguson, Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University

Arancha González, Executive Director of the International Trade Center

Doris Leuthard, Federal Councillor of the Swiss Confederation

Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund

Fatima Bhutto, Writer

Fu Ying, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China

Prof. Linda Hill, Wallace Brett Donham Professor of Business Administration, Harvard University

Lord Brian Griffiths of Florestfach, Vice Chairman, Goldman Sachs International

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Former Secretary General of NATO
Each year, the St. Gallen Symposium revolves around a core theme – linked to some of the most pressing economic and political challenges of our time. At the symposium, we explore the theme’s relevance for business, but also show that corporations have an integral role in shaping solutions.

#freedomrevisited
Key Findings of the 49th St. Gallen Symposium

During the symposium, participants examined the very nature of the system that has organised our economies and preoccupied politicians for centuries. In the face of profound, existential threats, they agreed that capitalism and the way we do business must change, but opinions differed on who should primarily be in charge, and how.

THE CONTESTATION OF CAPITALISM

Discussions took place amongst increasingly critical perceptions of capitalism worldwide – particularly among young people – rooted in rising inequality, climate change, and lack of investment in the “real” economy.

“One has to decide whether one wants to go for growth and innovation and accept a greater level of inequality, or whether one wants a more egalitarian society.” Prof. Niall Ferguson, Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University

Participants acknowledged that if capitalism is to survive, it must be reshaped to alleviate these multiple crises. While consensus largely prevailed over the grand challenges we face, decision-makers clashed over how, and by whom, solutions should be designed.

PURPOSE BEYOND PROFIT?

Sustainability and conservation of nature are often still seen as separate from the sphere of normal business; however, a more integrated view is increasingly gaining traction. Participants discussed the conjecture, advocated most strongly by the Leaders of Tomorrow, that business should promote, among its core purposes, long-term goals other than profit.

“If we don’t start right now and start to invest, we will not manage to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. The sense of urgency is not yet here – and we as leaders have to push that urgency that we do more and do it faster.” Anna Rytt, Chair of Board, Summa Equity

Others cautioned against such a radical re-visioning of the corporation, noting that business above all has to be economically sustainable. Ultimately, visions of integrated business models for purpose beyond profit remained opposed to more traditional views of doing business first, doing good later.

AGENTS FOR CHANGE

The discussion also turned to where and how change would best be initiated. Many participants viewed individuals as the strongest force for change within corporations. The potential of a global wave of young people moving into positions of decision-making power and demanding more effective measures for inclusion, sustainability, and positive impact of business beyond profits, was considered immense.

“Young people are not the future. They are the most powerful force right now.” Bobby Jones, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, Peace First

In the face of populism, climate change, and rapid technological disruption, liberalism – with individual freedom at its core – has been called into question. 50 years after the foundation of our initiative, we believe that it is crucial to rethink what these values mean to us and to you.

Freedom Revisited

At the 50th St. Gallen Symposium, three generations will discuss the future of individual, economic, and political freedom in light of key challenges of our time. Which aspects of freedom are currently under attack and call for a strong defence? And where will we need to recalibrate our concept of freedom, or the balance we strike with other values, such as equality, sustainability, and security?

FREEDOM AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Global youth marching for decisive climate action remind us that one’s own freedom ends where the freedom of others is constrained. Leaders of today now face the question how to reconcile freedom – particularly in its individual and economic variants – with saving the planet.

FREEDOM AND ITS POLITICAL CONTESTANTS

The liberal model faces growing opposition. In various countries, liberal democracy is under pressure; on the international stage, liberal multilateralism is falling out of favour.

With non-democratic political systems gaining confidence about exporting their model, the core qualities of a post-liberal global order – and its implications for the business world – are far from clear.

FREEDOM AND RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

Contemporary capitalism expands the proportion of social life open to data collection and processing. While it has been argued that big data threatens privacy, free market competition and democracy, others emphasize its unmatched potential for societal progress and economic prosperity. This raises the question how related risks and opportunities must be shaped by core stakeholders in politics, business, and society.
The rapid development of artificial intelligence and biotechnology poses an unprecedented challenge to the freedom of every individual. This makes a return to moral convictions and philosophical principles more important than ever before. This includes – in particular – civil liberties, which must also apply to the internet. Those who make use of their freedom must bear the responsibility: also for ecological effects. Climate change must not, however, lead to an increase in arbitrariness and unnecessary intervention. The proven system of market economy, good sense, progress, freedom, and responsibility does not need to be rethought. All it needs are adjustments to meet the current challenges.

As humans, our evaluation of freedom is tied to our right to protect our lives, liberty, and acquired property. As long as we do not violate the rights of others, we should be sovereign over our own affairs. However, our ability to determine our affairs comes with checks and balances systems, the government, and society. The three elements – ourselves, government, and society – are in constant adjustment about just how much each should influence and modify others. Our reaction and acceptance of any situation is based on our perceived control of the circumstances. That perceived control is inherently based on our realisation and wielding of our agencies.

Climate change and environmental degradation have enormous implications for human freedom. For example, due to rising temperatures and altered natural ecologies, we anticipate mass environmental migration. In some places like South Africa, we already observe rationing of critical resources like fresh water, which infringes human activities. The burning of massive areas of tropical rain forests in the Amazon and Indonesia are other examples of vital resources that affect business and international politics. Nature is intimately tied to socio-economic forces. We urgently need to lower our carbon footprint and adapt our land use choices if we want to preserve the current freedoms that humans experience.

The freedom of each individual to think and act is one of the privileges of democratic economic systems. Restrictions endanger more than just our prosperity. They also threaten our way of living and thinking. Instead of issuing prohibitions and other stately interventions, result-oriented targets within the context of current geopolitical issues are more likely to be effective because they allow free choice of the means to achieve these goals. In my opinion, the consistent promotion of technological, social and economic innovations is a more useful way forward. Our great advances did not come about through prohibition, isolation or walls, but through the promotion of talent, research, and the free exchange of goods and ideas.
Two days of energising debates on and off the main stage offer an opportunity to delve into the symposium theme. By involving three generations, we aim to provide diverse – and at times even surprising – perspectives. With our discussions, we inspire aspirations.
Debate and Create

From Plenary Sessions addressing a large audience, to Insight Sessions providing an intimate exchange of ideas among a small selection of participants, the St. Gallen Symposium offers a wide range of discussions.

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<td>① Plenary Sessions</td>
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① **PLENARY SESSIONS**
Plenary Sessions inspire the symposium’s participants in the main auditorium and set the tone through keynotes, panels, and one-on-one debate sessions. A constructive exchange of views is fostered through participation in the assembly, moderated by one of our renowned Topic Leaders.

② **INSIGHT SESSIONS**
Smaller groups of around 40 participants engage in in-depth discussions, on equal footing and off the record. Insight Sessions are the most suitable format for direct and unrestricted discussion between speakers and participants. Plenary speakers may wish to expand on their remarks in a smaller setting, or speakers provide exclusive expertise on a topic that more deeply explores the overall symposium theme.

③ **PUBLIC INSIGHT SESSIONS**
Dive deeper with our Public Insight Sessions. With great speakers, participants can lean back, soak up the input, and enjoy fresh insights into both current affairs and ongoing debates in the fields of business and politics.

④ **INTERACTIVE SESSIONS**
Interactive Sessions take place parallel to our Insight Sessions; together, they form two core elements of the symposium programme. Interactive Sessions focus on a central issue related to the overall symposium theme, with the aim of developing solutions; in a workshop setting, participants can co-create together.

⑤ **SOCIAL SESSIONS**
While the meeting formats provide food for thought and the opportunity to engage in moderated discussions, Social Sessions’ informal atmosphere is equally important. Vibrant settings range from informal gatherings in a student flat to exquisite dinner nights on campus or in the city of St. Gallen.

### SIDE EVENTS
Besides the main programme, we organise several side events, such as country gatherings, Leaders of Tomorrow talks, Aspiring Leader and interest-specific meetings as well as executive roundtables. These side events offer an excellent opportunity for networking and informal exchange.

For further information please visit our website: symposium.org
Partners

A wide range of renowned organisations and companies support us financially, materially, or in advisory roles. They allow the inspiration of aspirations, among different generations of leaders throughout the year and during the St. Gallen Symposium.
Our Partners

The support of various institutions and private persons enable the exchange of ideas across generations at the St. Gallen Symposium. They play an important role in financing the St. Gallen Symposium, as well as in advising the students and ensuring the initiative’s continuity.

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Our Offering

PARTNER
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MEMBER
Participate in the St. Gallen Symposium, be inspired, and inspire others. You will debate and interact with key decision makers, thought leaders, and carefully selected brilliant young thinkers from all around the world.

LEADERS OF TOMORROW SPONSOR
Support us in bringing Leaders of Tomorrow from all over the world to Switzerland to contribute to the success of the St. Gallen Symposium.

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The St. Gallen Symposium is organised annually by the International Students’ Committee (ISC), an independent student initiative at the University of St. Gallen. For ten months, a team of approximately 30 students voluntarily engages in the challenging task of organising an outstanding St. Gallen Symposium. During the symposium week, the ISC Team is supported by about 450 student volunteers.

Organisation
International Students’ Committee (ISC)

The ISC Team is involved with the development of the conceptual framework and content of the St. Gallen Symposium, as well as with designing and planning the conference. Responsibilities range from contact with our partners or working with leading universities around the world, to supervising long-term projects in the fields of communication and information technology.

Members of the 50th ISC Team

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Vivian Bernet (CH)  
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Head of the Organising Committee

Leonard Castritius (CH/DE)  
Marco Jost (CH)  
Maximilian Wörlein (DE)

Strategic Associate

Alexandra Seeberger (CH)

“A team of young, highly committed students invest a year of their study time into personal growth to organise an inspiring and professional conference – that’s worth supporting!”

Dr Christoph Lues, Chief Executive Officer, Hilti Group and alumnus of the International Students’ Committee
Activities of the International Students’ Committee are guided by the St. Gallen Foundation for International Studies to ensure the St. Gallen Symposium’s long-term success. The Board of Trustees supervises the deployment and efficient use of available resources.

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