

INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE & POLICY SYMPOSIUM (ISPS)

“COLLABORATE TO INNOVATE: ADVANCING GLOBAL RESEARCH AMID GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES”

June 24th – 25th, 2026, Herrenhausen Palace, Hannover, Germany

TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE

As climate change, geopolitical tensions and rapid technological advances reshape our world, research and innovation are more vital – and politically sensitive – than ever. At the same time, universities face growing scrutiny: critiques of elitism, funding cuts, scepticism towards internationalisation, and increasing political pressure.

Today’s grand challenges require not just national efforts, but deep, sustained international collaboration. Research-intensive universities are central to this mission. By fostering talent, generating knowledge, and seizing new opportunities, they help societies work through uncertainty, respond to complexity, and shape a more sustainable, prosperous, and resilient future.

The ISPS 2026 brings together international university leaders, researchers and policymakers to explore how research-intensive universities shape the future through research and innovation. Participants will share experiences, best practices and identify new ways to strengthen international partnerships together.

The symposium addresses four interconnected themes, each with a shared global perspective:

1. **From research to impact: Making knowledge matter.** How can global partnerships accelerate the translation of research into innovation? What role can European research and mobility funding play in a changing global science system? Which collaborative infrastructures and frameworks, such as the UK’s spinout ecosystem and German industry’s commitment to research, best support knowledge transfer and innovation?
2. **Free research for open societies?** As disinformation and authoritarian pressure grow, how can research-intensive universities uphold democratic values? How can international academic cooperation support open societies? And how should Europe respond to safeguard academic freedom?
3. **Research building a safer world: security, resilience and universities.** How does an ever-growing focus on security and defence affect universities? How will it impact research and international academic cooperation?
4. **Dear ChatGPT, when *should* I use you? AI and ethics in research.** How is machine learning changing research? What ethical questions does this raise? How can AI become more reliable, explainable, and fair?

Keynote: Meeting the challenge: universities in turbulent times – As geopolitics, demographics and budgets become ever more challenging, how can digital transformation, internationalisation, and innovative financing models help universities respond? How will research-intensive, internationally oriented universities adapt to future financial realities, maintain academic excellence and fulfill social responsibilities?

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Wednesday, June 24th	
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM (DAY 1)	
12:00–13:00	Light Lunch
13:00–13:30	<p>Opening & Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Georg Schütte, Secretary General of Volkswagen Foundation</i> • <i>Michael Hoch, Chair of German U15, Rector of the University of Bonn</i> • <i>Chris Day, Chair of Russell Group, Vice-Chancellor and President Newcastle University</i>
13:30–14:45	<p>Panel discussion I: “From research to impact: Making knowledge matter”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Manuel Heitor, Technical University of Lisbon, former Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Portugal</i> • <i>Antonio Navarra, Professor of Meteorology and Climatology, University of Bologna</i> • <i>Lucy Yu, CEO Centre for Net Zero (Octopus Energy)</i> • <i>Kathryn Chapman, Executive Director Innovate Cambridge</i> • <i>Timo Betz, Professor of Biophysics, University of Göttingen</i> <p><i>Moderation: Hauke Heekeren, University of Hamburg</i></p>
14:45–15:45	<p>Walk & Talk networking break @Herrenhausen Garden</p>
15:45–16:00	Afternoon Tea & Coffee
16:00–17:15	<p>Panel discussion II: “Free research for open societies?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Helen Czerski, Professor in Physics, University College London</i> • <i>Walter Rosenthal, President of the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK)</i> • <i>Nabila Abbas, Policy Analyst, JRC European Commission</i> • <i>Maximilian Mayer, Junior-Professor for International Relations and Global Politics of Technology, University of Bonn</i> <p><i>Moderation: Francesca Biagini, LMU Munich</i></p>

17:15–17:55	Keynote “Meeting the challenge: Universities in Turbulent Times” <i>Sir Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Edinburgh</i>
18:00	Reception

Thursday, June 25th
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM (DAY 2)

08:30	Welcome Tea & Coffee
09:00–10:15	Panel discussion III: “Research for building a safer world: security, resilience and universities” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ursula Schröder, Director Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, University of Hamburg</i> • <i>Marika Taylor, Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Birmingham</i> • <i>Mattias Björnmalm, Secretary General of CESAER</i> <p><i>Moderation: Geraint Rees, Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation & Global Engagement), University College London</i></p>
10:15–11:00	Walk & Talk, networking @Herrenhausen Garden
11:00–12:15	Panel discussion IV: “Dear ChatGPT, when should I use you? AI and ethics in research” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maruxa Martinez-Campos, Programme Manager, UK Research and Integrity Office</i> • <i>Benjamin Lange, MCML Junior Research Group 'Ethics of Artificial Intelligence', LMU Munich</i> • <i>Benjamin Risse, Professor of Computer Vision & Machine Learning, University of Münster</i> <p><i>Moderation: Amanda Wolthuizen, Vice President, Strategic Engagement and Communications, and Chief of Staff to the President, Imperial College London (tbc)</i></p>
12:15–12:30	Wrap up & Farewell Karla Pollmann, U15 and Shearer West, Russell Group
12:30–13:30	Networking Lunch