



New
Direction



THINK
TANK
CENTRAL

FREEDOM

IN A CHANGING WORLD



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20th-21st May 2025 | Brussels

Stanhope Hotel | Rue du Commerce 9 | 1000 Brussels | Belgium

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Wi-Fi Network: Thon Hotels



New Direction



Founded by Margaret Thatcher in 2009 as the intellectual hub of European Conservatism, New Direction has established academic networks across Europe and research partnerships throughout the world.

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REGISTERED OFFICE: Rue du Trône, 4, 1000 Brussels, Belgium. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Witold de Chevilly.

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It is a great honour for me to serve as the **President of New Direction – the Foundation for European Reform**. Especially as this is an exciting time for the conservative movement worldwide, but more importantly in our shared home of Europe.

Now, more than ever, it is important that organisations like **New Direction** work to promote a compassionate, common sense, approach to tackling the major issues of the day. From reports exploring how to make the market work for citizens, to conferences discussing how to build stronger ties with our democratic allies around the world, to finding ways to work with new and exciting political movements – **New Direction** will always aim to be at the forefront of thinking.

We conservatives have a proud tradition to stand behind, with thinkers like **Edmund Burke**, **Roger Scruton**, **Leo Longanesi**, and **Alexis de Tocqueville** to guide our thinking, and political figures like **Margaret Thatcher**, **Ronald Reagan**, and **Pope John Paul II** to inspire us.

I would like to thank members of the European Conservative family for entrusting me with this responsibility, and I would in particular like to thank my two Vice Presidents **Roberts Zile** and **Alexandr Vondra** for their support, as well as the entire Board of Directors. With their support, we can ensure that this foundation guarantees the **ECR** family is intellectually equipped for the years ahead.

Nicola Procaccini

*President of New Direction
and Co-chair of the ECR Group*



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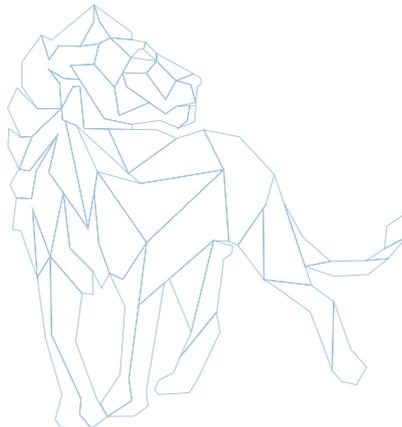
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Think Tank Central 2025: Freedom in a Changing World

Think Tank Central is our flagship event of the year, bringing together civil society organisations from across Europe, and beyond, and bridging the full spectrum of the centre-right. Our aim with **Think Tank Central** is to create a forum from which various organisations can have open discussions about policy, exchange best practices, and connect with one another.

This year we are pleased to have more than 60 different organisations represented, coming from over 20 different countries, including from the United States, Canada, Israel, Poland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Italy.

Format

In the spirit of connecting civil society groups and the honest exchange of views, the majority of the conference will be held as roundtable discussions. You will have a chance to choose between two different parallel sessions, that will be introduced by Member of the European Parliament, with opening statements by organisations that specialise in the topic, before the floor is handed to you. The moderators will strictly keep to a five-minute speaking time per person - to ensure the most people can take part in the discussion.

Coalition Meeting

New Direction is pleased to be partnered with our friends at the **Tholos Foundation** and **American's for Tax Reform** in hosting an in person coalition meeting. The most famous of these coalition meetings is the 'Wednesday Meeting' held in Washington, D.C. every week, for centre-right organisations and legislators to exchange views, ideas, and coordinate campaigns. We welcome you to contribute to our own **Coalition Meeting**.

Tuesday 20th May 2025

Morning

Arrivals, Coffee & Registration

09:00 - 09:10 am

Balmoral 1+2
Introduction

09:10 - 09:30 am

Balmoral 1+2
Keynote Speech

The Conservative Vision for Freedom in the 21st Century

What does conservatism mean in the 21st century - and why is freedom the main vehicle for the conservative movement?

- **Nicola Procaccini MEP** - *President of New Direction and Co-chair of the ECR Group*
-

09:30 - 10:30 am

Balmoral 1+2
Panel 1

Beauty

Conservatives spend a lot of time talking about policy, but sometimes forget that it is important to respect beauty. We need to be able to identify with the world around us and create a sense of belonging. That belonging can be related to a place, or a feeling, or a sense of spiritual connection beyond the material world - beauty creates that bridge.

- **Eric Norin** - *Architectural Uprising (Sweden)*
 - **Robert Adam** - *Roger Scruton Legacy Foundation*
-

10:30 - 11:00 am

Lobby Bar
Coffee Break



11:00 - 12:30 pm

Balmoral 1+2

Panel 2

The Defense of the Free World

With active conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, and the threat of war in Asia and Latin America, the world has never been more dangerous. The need to strengthen Europe and NATO, and renew the bonds of the free world has never been more clear. The questions are however, how can we achieve this? How do we re-arm? And can we still call on the United States for support?

PARTICIPANTS

- **Liliana Śmiech** - *Warsaw Institute (Poland)* **MODERATOR**
- **Rihards Kols MEP** - *Former Chair Foreign Affairs Committee Latvia (Latvia)*
- **Prof. Fabrizio Lucioli** - *Chairman Italian Atlantic Council (Italy)*
- **Maryan Zablonskyy MP** - *Member of Parliament from Ukraine and founder Center for Effective Legislation (Ukraine)*
- **Dr Kiron Skinner** - *President Forum for America and the World and Former Director of Policy Planning in the Trump White House (United States)*
- **Dr Alan Mendoza** - *Henry Jackson Society (United Kingdom)*

12:30 - 14:00 pm

Lobby Bar

Coalition Lunch

Coalition meeting organised by American for Tax Reform in which member think tanks can introduce themselves and their work to other people present.

- Hosted by **Lorenzo Montanari** and **Chris Butler** - *Tholos Foundation (USA)*



Breakout session 1
14:00 - 15:30pm

Balmoral 1 Migration

The migrant crisis of 2014 radically changed the shape of societies in Europe, putting increased pressure on public services and exposing societal problems at home. Over the last decade, European policy makers have struggled to come to grips with the scale of the issue. However, new approaches are starting to see an impact. The question remains, what are the best strategies for tackling migration and how do we implement them?

OPENING SPEAKER

- **Charlie Weimers MEP** (Sweden)

PARTICIPANTS

- **Maicol Pizzicotti Busilacchi**
- New Direction **MODERATOR**
- **Simo Grönroos** - Suomen Perusta (Finland)
- **Guy Dampier** - Prosperity Institute (United Kingdom)
- **Maxime Aymar** - observatoire de l'immigration et de la démographie (France)
- **Olivier Bault**
- Ordo Iuris (Poland)

Balmoral 2 Educational Freedom

The debate over what should be taught to our children, and how, in Europe has intensified with recent cases of cancel culture against teachers and the advancement of progressive ideas in the curriculum. For that reason the discussion about educational freedom and school choice for parents should be re-opened. How can we give parents more control over what their children learn? What can we do to protect academics from cancel culture? And how can we make education more competitive?

OPENING SPEAKERS

- **Laurence Trochu MEP** (France)
- **Stephen Bartulica MEP** - Political Network for Values (Croatia)

PARTICIPANTS

- **Robert Tyler**
- New Direction **MODERATOR**
- **Ignasi Grau** - OIDEL (Switzerland)
- **Patricia Santos** - CEU CEFAS (Spain)
- **Kate Pesey** - La Bourse Tocqueville (France)
- **Thierry Lafont** - ISSEP (France)
- **Adina Portaru** - ADF International (Belgium)

15:30 - 16:00 pm

Lobby Bar
Coffee Break



Breakout session 2
16:00 - 17:30

Balmoral 1

Stewardship of the Natural World

Caring for and protecting the environment is not only a moral duty but also a responsibility to future generations. The conservative tradition recognises the natural order as an essential part of our shared heritage. In an age where environmentalism is too often hijacked by ideological agendas and centralised control, we must address an approach that combines sustainability with economic freedom and subsidiarity (local government). How do we safeguard our natural resources without undermining the prosperity of our communities? And what policies truly promote responsible stewardship from the ground up?

OPENING SPEAKERS

- **Aurelijus Veryga MEP** (*Lithuania*)
- **Beatrice Timgren MEP** (*Sweden*)

PARTICIPANTS

- **Maria Cholewinska** - *Fundacja Obserwatorium Rozwoju Gospodarki i Demokracji - CEE Growth and Development* **MODERATOR**
- **Prof. Francesco Corvaro** - *Special Envoy for Climate Change of the Italian Government. (Italy)*
- **Drew Bond** - *C3 and former Bush Energy Advisor (United States)*
- **Otto Brons-Peterson** - *CEPOS and EPICENTER (Denmark)*
- **Wolfgang Müller** - *Institute for Climate and Energy (Germany)*
- **Prof. Gian Piero Joime** - *Marconi University (Italy)*
- **Francesco Giubilei** - *Nazione Futura, Fondazione AN, Author Green Conservatism (Italy)*

Balmoral 2

The Next Generation of Conservative Leaders

The future of the conservative movement in Europe relies on our ability to raise a new generation of conservative activists rooted in tradition, liberty, and national identity. Tomorrow's leaders must be prepared not only to defend our values but to renew them for a changing world. How do we cultivate the next generation of leadership? What structures and networks are needed to ensure continuity and growth across generations of conservatives?

OPENING SPEAKERS

- **Stefano Cavedagna MEP** (*Italy*)
- **Kristoffer Storm MEP** (*Denmark*)

PARTICIPANTS

- **Arvid Hallen** - *Oikos* **MODERATOR**
- **Maicol Pizzicotti Busilacchi** - *Presenting New Direction Youth Projects (Italy)*
- **Yurii Stechyshyn** - *EDYN Ambassador and Lviv City Councillor (Ukraine)*
- **Jan Mošovský** - *Europe Director of European Students for Liberty (Czech Republic)*
- **Dr. Michael Dust** - *Chairman IYDU - CDU Germany (Germany)*
- **Krzysztof Szczucki** - *President of AboutPolska - (Poland)*

18:00 - 21:00 pm

Lobby Bar
Evening Reception

Wednesday 21st May 2025

Breakout session 3
09:00 - 10:30 am

Balmoral 1

Conservative Economics: Free Trade vs Protectionism

The recent debate about tariffs and a trade war between great powers has reignited the debate about what kind of economic policy conservatives should take. On one side of the argument are those who make the case that reducing tariffs and regulatory burden free up the economy and generate mass prosperity. On the other side are those who favour state intervention and argue that it is the role of the government to protect industry from foreign competition.

OPENING SPEAKER

- **Johan van Overtveldt MEP** (Belgium)
- **Roberts Zile MEP** (Latvia)

PARTICIPANTS

- **Robert Tyler**
- *New Direction* **MODERATOR**
- **Philip Thompson** - *Tholos Foundation, Author of the Trade Barriers Index* (United States)
- **Arvid Hallen** - *Oikos Foundation* (Sweden)
- **Domenico Lombardi** - *Professor of Public Policy, LUISS University* (Italy)
- **Pawel Gruze** - *Fundacja Obserwatorium Rozwoju Gospodarki i Demokracji* - CEE Growth and Development

Balmoral 2

European Industrial Policy

Europe is facing a productivity crisis, as highlighted by the recent 'Draghi Report', which demonstrates that over regulation and high taxes have destroyed competitiveness. The question then is what kind of industrial policy the EU should adopt? What fiscal tools can be used? And what regulation can be removed to ease competitiveness?

OPENING SPEAKER

- **Alexandr Vondra MEP**
(Czech Republic)

PARTICIPANTS

- **Patrick Egan** - *Brussels Signal* **MODERATOR**
- **Dan Mitchell** - *Center for Freedom and Prosperity* (United States)
- **Peter Meijer** - *New Industrial Corporation* (United States)
- **Elmars Kehris** - *Latvian Economists Association* (Latvia)
- **Peter Torcsi** - *Oeconomus Economic Research Foundation* (Hungary)

10:30 – 11:00 am

Lobby Bar
Coffee Break

Breakout session 4
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Balmoral 1
Digital Freedom and Big Tech Regulation

Recent cases of de-platforming have highlighted the extent to which big tech companies cannot be trusted on the issue of free speech. Social Media platforms have been found to politicise their algorithms against more conservative voices. At the same time, there is the question of the spread of disinformation.

OPENING SPEAKER

- **Beata Szydlo MEP** (*Poland*)
- **Georgiana Teodorescu MEP** (*Romania*)

PARTICIPANTS

- **Gary Kavanagh** - *Edmund Burke Institute (Ireland)* **MODERATOR**
- **Dan Schneider** - *Media Research Center (United States)*
- **Rob Roos** - *Member Advisory Council New Direction (Netherlands)*
- **Andrei Dirlau** - *Mihai Eminescu Institute for Conservative Political Studies (Romania)*
- **Daniel Cochrane** - *Heritage Foundation (United States)*
- **Baroness Claire Fox** - *Academy of Ideas (United Kingdom)*

Balmoral 2
AI vs Human beings – Risks and Opportunities

As global powers race to dominate AI, the West risks ceding strategic ground to authoritarian regimes that exploit these technologies without regard for human rights or ethical boundaries. At the same time, AI raises critical moral questions: What remains of human agency, responsibility, and identity in a world driven by algorithms? For conservatives, the answer lies in defending the primacy of the human person, upholding ethical limits, and ensuring that innovation serves free nations, not the other way around. Can Europe forge a path that protects its values while remaining competitive on the world stage?

OPENING SPEAKER

- **Diego Solier MEP** (*Spain*)
- **Francesco Torselli MEP** (*Italy*)

PARTICIPANTS

- **Mate Curic** - *Centre for Cultural Renewal (Croatia)* **MODERATOR**
- **Max Rangeley** - *Cobden Center (United Kingdom)*
- **Gavin Haynes** - *Danube Institute (Hungary)*
- **Dimitar Liliakov** - *Martens Center (EU)*
- **Andrzej Zybortowicz** - *Polska Wielki Projekt (Poland)*
- **Tania Rak** - *We are Innovation (Ukraine)*

12:30 – 13:30 pm

Lobby Bar
Lunch





About Polska

About Polska is a space that connects young people from all over the country who are guided by patriotic values, respect for history, the idea of economic freedom, republican principles and the foundations of European civilization, to engage together in building the future of Poland



Academy of Ideas

The Academy of Ideas is a UK-based organization dedicated to fostering open and robust public debate on contemporary issues.



Alliance Defending Freedom

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is a prominent American conservative Christian legal advocacy organization established in 1993. ADF operates with a mission to protect religious freedom, free speech, and parental rights.



The Architectural Uprising

The Architectural Uprising (Arkitekturupproret) is a Swedish non-profit organization founded in 2016, emerging from a Facebook group established in 2014. It advocates for a return to classical and traditional architectural styles, challenging the prevalence of modernist designs in urban environments



C3

The Conservative Coalition for Climate Solutions (C3 Solutions) is a U.S.-based nonprofit organization founded in 2020. C3 Solutions advocates for conservative approaches to climate change, emphasizing free-market principles, innovation, and limited government intervention.



Center for Freedom and Prosperity

CF&P advocates for free-market policies, limited government, and fiscal sovereignty. Its primary initiative is the Coalition for Tax Competition, which opposes international efforts to restrict tax competition and financial privacy.



Center for the Renewal of Culture

The Center for the Renewal of Culture (Centar za obnovu kulture – COK) is a Croatian non-governmental organization founded in 2009 and based in Zagreb. Its mission is to promote conservative values, national sovereignty, and personal freedom, with a focus on renewing Croatian culture through education and public discourse.



CEPOS

CEPOS (Center for Political Studies) is an independent Danish think tank based in Copenhagen, founded in 2004. It promotes classical liberal and free-market ideas, advocating for individual freedom, limited government, and strong civil institutions.



CEU-CEFAS

Spanish conservative think tank affiliated with the Fundación Universitaria San Pablo CEU. It promotes Christian humanism and national regeneration through research, education, and public engagement.



THE COBDEN CENTRE

Cobden Centre

The Cobden Centre is a UK-based economic think tank founded in 2010. The Centre is named after 19th-century classical liberal Richard Cobden, renowned for his advocacy of free trade and individual liberty.



Danube Institute

The Danube Institute is a conservative think tank based in Budapest, Hungary, established in 2013. It promotes conservatism, classical liberal economics, and a realistic Atlanticism in national security policy, aiming to foster dialogue between Central Europe and the English-speaking world.



Edmund Burke Institute

Conservative think tank based in Ireland focused on issues of free speech, individual responsibility, and protection of traditional values.



EDYN

The European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN) is a nonpartisan youth-led initiative founded in 2018 to empower young pro-democracy leaders across Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, and the South Caucasus.



FAKS

Norwegian Association for All Conservative Students. Founded May 17th 2017, the association is an open forum for conservative students and alumni, unaffiliated with any political party.



Henry Jackson Society

The Henry Jackson Society (HJS) is a UK-based think tank established in 2005. HJS focuses on promoting liberal democracy, human rights, and combating extremism globally.



Heritage Foundation

The Heritage Foundation is an American conservative think tank based in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1973 Heritage's mission is to formulate and promote public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.



ISSEP

Founded in 2018 in Lyon by Marion Maréchal and Thibaut Monnier, the Institut des Sciences Sociales, Économiques et Politiques (ISSEP) is a private higher education institution offering programs in political science and project management.



Latvian Economists Association

A free market based think tank in Latvia, co-founded by Roberts Zile with an aim to promote economic best practices.



Media Research Center

The Media Research Center (MRC) is a prominent American conservative nonprofit organization established in 1987 by L. Brent Bozell III. Headquartered in Herndon, Virginia, its mission is to expose and counteract what it perceives as liberal bias in the national news media, and to promote conservative viewpoints across various media platforms.



Nazione Futura

Nazione Futura is a conservative Italian think tank and cultural movement founded in 2017. The activity of the think tank is structured through the publication of a quarterly magazine of political, economic and cultural analysis.



Observatoire de l'Immigration et de la Démographie

The Observatoire de l'Immigration et de la Démographie (OID) is a French think tank focused on immigration and demographic issues. Founded in 2021, it promotes research and public debate around the social, economic, and cultural impacts of immigration in France.



Oeconomus

The Oeconomus Economic Research Foundation is a Budapest-based think tank established in 2019, focusing on economic and geopolitical research. It aims to analyse domestic and international economic trends.



Oikos

Oikos is a Swedish conservative think tank founded in 2020. It aims to promote traditional values, national identity, and cultural heritage, drawing inspiration from philosopher Sir Roger Scruton.



Ordo Iuris

The Ordo Iuris is a Polish conservative think tank focused on the preservation of the rule of law, traditional values, and national identity.



Polska Wielki Projekt

The Polska Wielki Projekt Foundation is a prominent Polish non-governmental organization dedicated to fostering conservative and patriotic discourse. Established to continue the legacy of President Lech Kaczyński, the foundation aims to promote Polish sovereignty, historical awareness, and cultural identity.



Prosperity Institute

The Prosperity Institute is a London-based think tank dedicated to advancing and protecting the principles that foster national prosperity. Established in 2007 as the Legatum Institute, it was renamed in January 2025.



Roger Scruton Legacy Foundation

The Roger Scruton Legacy Foundation is dedicated to preserving and advancing the philosophical and cultural contributions of Sir Roger Scruton. Through events, lectures, and research, it promotes the conservation and continuation of Western traditions in philosophy, art, and architecture.



Students for Liberty

Students For Liberty (SFL) is the world's largest international pro-liberty student organization, dedicated to educating, developing, and empowering the next generation of leaders committed to liberty. Founded in 2008.



Suomen Perusta

Suomen Perusta (The Foundation of Finland) is a Finnish political think tank established in 2012, closely affiliated with the Finns Party. It concentrates on research and policy analysis in areas such as immigration, multiculturalism, European integration, and economics.



The Taxpayers Alliance

The TaxPayers' Alliance (TPA) is a UK-based grassroots pressure group established in 2004 by Matthew Elliott and Andrew Allum. It advocates for lower taxes, reduced government spending, and increased transparency in public finances.



Tholos Foundation

The Tholos Foundation is a U.S.-based nonprofit organization founded in 1985 at the request of President Ronald Reagan. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., it is dedicated to promoting free-market principles, limited government, secure property rights, and individual liberty as the foundations for global prosperity and peace.



Warsaw Institute

The Warsaw Institute is a Polish think tank established in 2014, specialising in geopolitics, international relations, and security issues pertinent to Poland and Central and Eastern Europe. It publishes analyses and policy recommendations, and organises conferences and seminars to support decision-making processes.



We Are Innovation

We Are Innovation is a dynamic network of individuals and institutions who deeply believe in innovation's power to drive progress and solve the world's most pressing problems.





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New Direction promotes its ideas with a number of unique initiatives. We have done this by launching the following:



New Direction's twice annual publication discussing key ideas and policy areas of the European conservative movement, giving a voice to the new centre-right majority.



Webcast series that will seek to revisit conservative approaches to the most pressing policy and political issues of our time, in Europe and beyond.



New Direction is investing in Europe's next generation by training young academics in strategic leadership, research techniques and effective communications.



The ultimate goal of New Direction's European Conservative Students project is to create a pan-European conservative student movement by creating a network between already existing conservative student organizations in European countries.



New Direction's flagship forum for the discussion of security, defence, and geopolitics, bringing together leading diplomats, experts and policy makers.



New Direction hosts annually its Western Balkans Summit bringing together politicians and experts from countries across the EU and the Western Balkans to discuss the progress made in recent years, current situation, challenges and future priorities.



New Directions annual awards ceremony recognising conservative leaders in all walks of life. The Thatcher awards are there to honour our founding patron, Margaret Thatcher.



New Direction annual gathering of leading conservative and libertarian think tanks.



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