

CONCLAVE

Operated by EUROPANOVA

PRESS RELEASE : 2026 CONCLAVE - 3rd EDITION

« From European Strengths to EU Power »

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What key action is needed to strengthen Europe's power while preserving cohesion among Europeans? This is the central challenge of the third Conclave, whose recommendations will be addressed directly to heads of government.

Donald Trump's return to the White House acts as a brutal accelerator of transformations already underway: the international balance increasingly rests explicitly on power — economic, technological, industrial, and military. The United States, China, and Russia now openly embrace the primacy of power politics. The European Union possesses considerable assets — a market of 450 million citizens, a leading industrial and technological base, consolidating defense capabilities, and a robust democratic model.

If it fails to mobilize these strengths to swiftly reclaim its rightful place among the great powers, Europe and its peoples face a rapid risk of vassalization and the erosion of its values.

The 2026 Conclave, 3rd edition in Brussels (January 15-17)

It is in this context that the 2026 edition of the Conclave organized by EuropaNova will take place in Brussels, entitled "From European Strengths to EU Power." It will be held from January 15 to 17 at the Royal Academy of Belgium and at the headquarters of Bruegel, the world's leading think tank. The two previous Conclaves anticipated current developments and demonstrated the need for Europe to equip itself with a genuine power strategy. The third will be devoted not to diagnosis, but to action.

Strategically positioned ahead of Davos, the Conclave brings together a European community of decision-makers and opinion leaders to address a now central question: how can Europe transform its strengths into effective power?

Beyond the power agenda, the aim of this Conclave is also to set out a growth agenda.

Among the 50 leading European figures in attendance — drawn from the political, economic, scientific, administrative, and cultural spheres — are notably **Nadia Calviño**, President of the European Investment Bank, and **Andrius Kubilius**, European Commissioner for Defence and Space. Their contributions will help shape the collective reflection on the strategic future of the European Union.

2026 will be a major electoral year: to inform debate and feed into policy platforms, the conclusions of the work will be presented to candidates in the various elections taking place across Europe in 2026.

A work programme combining strategic reflection and public sessions

Held behind closed doors (under Chatham House rules), the Conclave's work will revolve around three major structuring themes at the heart of the European Union's ability to carry weight on the world stage:

- **Growth**: overcoming the structural limits of Europe's growth potential in order to transform the Union's competitiveness strategy into a genuine agenda of economic, industrial, and technological power.
- **Democracy**: strengthening resilient democratic leadership — both among citizens and within institutions — and building a new generation of European democracy that is inclusive and credible.
- **Geopolitics** (including defense and security) : asserting a shared vision of European strategic autonomy, reconciling global partnerships, collective security, and the strengthening of European defence by 2030.

Discussions will integrate, on a cross-cutting basis, **issues related to digital technologies, industrial capacity, and artificial intelligence**, placed at the heart of European sovereignty.

The Conclave will be preceded, on January 15, 2026, by a preparatory workshop organized in partnership with ASML, entitled "How can Europe Shape Its Technological Resilience?" This workshop will feed into the Conclave's discussions on technological, industrial, and sovereignty challenges.

It will be followed by a public conference at the **Royal Academy of Belgium**, opened by its Flemish President, **Prof. Godelieve Laureys**, in the presence of figures from academia, politics, business, and the media, as well as speakers representing Europe's major political families — such as former European Commissioners **Nicolas Schmit, Mariya Gabriel, and António Vitorino** — and the world-renowned political scientist **Ivan Krastev**, President of the Center for Liberal Strategies.

On January 16 and 17, the Conclave seminar will then take place behind closed doors at **Bruegel**'s headquarters, alternating plenary sessions and thematic working groups to foster frank, demanding, and confidential exchanges, and to produce concrete, operational recommendations. These will be transmitted to the President of the European Council, **António Costa**, who hosted the first Conclave in Lisbon at the end of 2024 and concluded the second in Brussels in midJanuary 2025.

"The growth challenge facing Europe is real but complex," notes economist **Guntram Wolff**, former Director of Bruegel, in his introductory remarks ahead of the Conclave's growth discussions, which he will chair. "Ageing, the energy transition, the diffusion of AI, and geopolitical uncertainty create an environment in which incremental reforms will not suffice. Europe needs a bold programme that embraces structural change, encourages creative destruction, and mobilizes public and private investment at scale. The alternative is continued relative decline and the gradual erosion of economic and political influence."

Why the Conclave's contribution is essential

The Conclave is a **high-level ideas platform** designed to deepen reflection, **identify the right questions to ask about Europe's future challenges, and pinpoint the "game-changers"** — those key actors capable of restoring Europe's sovereignty in a multipolar and uncertain world.

“The Conclave is above all a method grounded in inclusivity and transparency, producing compromise on complex issues by bringing together opinion leaders in a transdisciplinary and transgenerational way,” explains Guillaume Klossa, Executive President of EuropaNova and cofounder of the Conclave. “The impact of our recommendations lies in fostering an open, continent-wide discussion aimed at directly supplying new and disruptive ideas to leaders and opinion-makers across the Union and its 27 Member States.”

About EuropaNova

EuropaNova is an independent think tank committed to a more sovereign, democratic Europe that is capable of acting on the world stage. Through the Conclave, EuropaNova seeks to actively contribute to shaping a European strategic thinking focused on action.

For more information: <https://europanova.eu/>

