
SUMMARY REPORT ON THE FOURTH WROCLAW CONFERENCE ON COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY: “GLOBAL CHALLENGES, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, AND CIVIC ACTION”

DANIEL W. BLOEMERS*
SEBASTIAN JAKUBOWSKI**

The annual Wroclaw Conference on Competitiveness and Sustainability has become a highly regarded place for discussion on the most important issues related to economic policy in the global economy.

This year's edition of the Wroclaw Conference on Competitiveness and Sustainability was devoted to Global Challenges, Innovative Approaches and Civic Action. The conference organisers' intention was to address issues relating to business innovation, infrastructure and societal dialogue. As Dr Sebastian Jakubowski, Chairman of the Conference's Scientific Committee, emphasised during his opening speech, innovations and responsible economic policy are fundamental for both Poland and the European Union.

The first lecture was presented by Dr Daniel W. Bloemers, who serves as a Policy Officer/International Relations Officer in the European Commission, Brussels, where he manages regulatory dialogues and contributes to the negotiation of international trade agreements in the field of government procurement, focusing on North and Latin American as well as Asian countries. Before joining the commission in 2015, Dr Bloemers served as the Head of Business Development and Strategy Planning at the Fraunhofer Center for International Management and Knowledge Economy. Dr Bloemers holds a B.A.

* Policy Officer – International Relations Officer in the European Commission (acting in a private capacity as co-chairman of the Wroclaw Symposia).

** Assistant Professor at the Institute of Economic Sciences, Faculty of Law, Administration and Economics, Wroclaw University, sebastian.jakubowski@uwr.edu.pl.

in Political Science, European Studies and Spanish from the University of Bremen; an M.A. in International Relations and International Economics from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (Washington DC, USA); and a doctoral degree in Business Economics/International Innovation Management from the University of Leipzig.

Dr Bloemers presented his views on European perspectives on economic and societal development, good governance, citizen engagement and international cooperation for prosperity and sustainability. Dr Bloemers' presentation explored the approach of the European Union to fostering sustainable economic development and societal cohesion. Starting from a set of global policy priorities, his presentation introduced selected mechanisms and policy instruments. In a second phase, participants were invited to discuss ideas on how to further improve smart and sustainable economic development in Europe.

At this conference, Dr Bloemers spoke in a private capacity, not as a representative of the European Commission.

The second speaker, Markus P. Raschke, serves as a project manager at Protect-the-Planet and member of the regional parliament of Upper Bavaria. Protect-the-Planet is an internationally operating NGO for climate protection, advocating the idea of a 100% sustainable economy. At present, Mr Raschke leads an international project of legal action, aiming at encouraging the European Union to strengthen its emission reduction targets. He is responsible for the coordination of an international cooperative of NGOs, environmentalists and environmental lawyers. As a former political public relations manager of the Ecological Democratic Party of Germany (ÖDP), he successfully managed a political referendum campaign to shut down a coal-fired power plant. In his current engagements, he moderates numerous societal dialogue processes on infrastructure and economic policy. Mr Raschke holds a degree in Governance and Public Policy from the University of Passau and a Master of Science in European Economic Integration from the Universities of Leipzig and Wroclaw. He contributed to innovation research projects at the Fraunhofer Center for International Management and Knowledge Economy.

In his presentation, Mr Raschke discussed instances of political failure in addressing large-scale challenges and presented non-governmental movements as an avant-garde of sustainability transition. He demonstrated how ostentatiously knowledge-based decision-making is jeopardised by an instinct of political self-preservation. According to Mr Raschke, a situation of systemic hullabaloo befuddles political actors and makes them look unfit to deal with pressing global challenges. This system failure of political leadership invigorates grass-root movements as well as non-governmental activism. It was demonstrated how civil, social and economic action is triggered by a new generation of non-political policymakers across Europe.

The third speaker, Daniel Iglhaut, works for the digital business unit of the Swiss-based and European-oriented energy company ALPIQ. Mr Iglhaut leads the operational development to scale up new digital business models in several markets. Previously, he worked in the start-up European Energy Service Platform (EESP) to grow the company right from the start. EESP was founded as a joint venture by two major European energy corporations to leverage business opportunities across European markets. Mr Iglhaut has also been a consultant at TÜV Rheinland, driving international corporate strategy projects and a European energy research project. As an experienced project manager for business development and R&D projects, he has gained excellent knowledge of the energy economy, go-to-market strategies and setting up new business models. Mr Iglhaut graduated from the University of Leipzig with a Master of Science in European Economic Integration. He also holds a Master's degree in Political Science from the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich. During his studies and within his professional career, he has gained extensive experience all over Europe.

Mr Iglhaut gave a presentation on the future of energy in the context of artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things and an all-electrified society. According to Mr Iglhaut, reconciling economic and environmental sustainability requires secure energy supply, increased energy efficiency and a drastic reduction in CO₂ emissions. In this process, European energy companies are facing unprecedented challenges and drawbacks through diminishing profits from no longer viable business logics. Also, the massive deployment of connected devices throughout many industries will radically change the realms of energy supply and consumption, transport, producing companies, and – last but not least – our personal lives. After a quick overview of relevant energy economics, Mr Iglhaut's presentation provided insights on digitalisation and applications for artificial intelligence in the energy sector. Energy challenges and ever-closer links to mobility and individual behaviour were also discussed.

The fourth speaker, Dr David E. Baur, serves as a physician in the Neurology Department of the University Hospital of Tübingen, Germany. In this position, he works at the interface of patient treatment, innovative medical research and medical student education. Having a clinical focus on neurological intensive care, he is primarily concerned with the treatment of patients with stroke. In terms of research, Dr Baur is associated with the Hertie Institute for Clinical Brain Research Tübingen, where he applies non-invasive brain stimulation methods, specifically transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). At present, he is working with TMS in motor-rehabilitation of chronic stroke patients. Dr Baur is a licensed physician graduated from the University of Leipzig, Germany. He holds a doctoral degree (Dr. med.), which he completed in the Carl-Ludwig-Institute for Physiology Leipzig, working at the neurophysiological basis of cerebellar synaptic transmission.

In his presentation, Dr Baur explored the problem of innovation for global health and medical technology start-ups at the interface of medicine and entrepreneurship. According to Dr Baur, rapid technological development as well as resource constraints call for innovative approaches also in the field of human health. In this context, his presentation showcased the development and implementation of new medical technologies. Difficulties in product launching for developers were explored. As an example, the approach of the MedTech Startup School Tübingen was presented.

The last speaker, Łukasz Chyla, is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Institute of Private Business Law, Faculty of Law and Administration of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków under the supervision of Professor Andrzej Szumański, the co-author of the Polish Code of Commercial Companies. He has completed several scholarship programmes and research stays, including at Melbourne Law School, Bucerius Law School, Cambridge University and Columbus Law School. He has also been a principal investigator of SYLFF and NCN Preludium research grants. The main subject of Mr Chyla's doctoral thesis is an analysis of the impact of prospectus obligations on the information efficiency of capital markets.

In his presentation, Mr Chyla discussed the latest 'Prospectus' Regulation (EU) 2017/1129. This legal act came into force in July 2019 and reformed the EU capital markets with respect to prospectus obligations. The underlying reasons and anticipated effects of the regulation were discussed alongside with chosen challenges faced by the EU capital markets union.

In conclusion, Dr Bloemers reflected on a selection of links between the five preceding presentations, highlighting their common narrative. He emphasised the pressing need for sustainable development supported by technological innovation across sectors – notably in the fields of energy and medicine. According to Dr Bloemers, devising solutions to increasingly complex challenges requires interdisciplinary approaches, which are, however, challenged by cognitive limitations. Dr Bloemers stressed the importance of intelligent regulatory frameworks to enable innovation and to prevent or mitigate unintended consequences. He also highlighted that, in democratic elections, citizens have the responsibility to empower those representatives they perceive to be best positioned to address the challenges faced by society and to strike the best possible balance. Such democratic participation needs to be accompanied by active civic engagement to ensure that the short- and long-term needs of all societal groups are considered.

In closing the fourth Wroclaw Conference on Competitiveness and Sustainability, and thanking speakers and other participants, Dr Sebastian Jakubowski expressed his hope that the next Conference to be held in spring 2020 would be as inspiring as this one.

This year Conference's Scientific Committee included Chairmen Dr Daniel W. Bloemers and Dr Sebastian Jakubowski. The remaining members of the Committee were Łukasz Chyla, a PhD candidate; Justyna Ziobrowska, PhD candidate; and Katarzyna Strzelczyk. The Fourth Wrocław Conference on Competitiveness and Sustainability was co-organised by Naukowe Koło Ekonomistów – NKE.