

Press release

Glasgow, November 3, 2021

COP26: FUTURIST Institute for Sustainable Transformation launched at ESMT Berlin

On the second day of the international climate conference COP26, leading representatives of German business, academia, and civil society launched a new sustainability institute. Based at ESMT Berlin, the FUTURIST Institute for Sustainable Transformation specializes in developing and communicating innovative sustainability solutions and supports companies in their transformation. It was founded by the international business school ESMT and the non-profit Frankfurt Werte-Stiftung together with their innovation platform FUTURY. The institute is made possible by initiative partners Deutsche Bank, Deutsche Post DHL Group, Procter&Gamble, and Schwarz Group and supported by BMW Group, Daimler, and Deutsche Telekom. To mark the launch of FUTURIST, the Werte-Stiftung presented its study, published jointly with the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and management consultants Bain & Company, in which it interviewed 20 German CEOs and developed recommendations for action on how companies can become more sustainable.

Ola Källenius, chairman of the board of management of Daimler AG and chairman of the board of trustees of the ESMT foundation, emphasizes, “Daimler is moving rapidly towards CO2-neutrality. We aspire to play a leading role in this transformation. An important driver for us is the opportunity to change the world for the better. Together with our partners at the new FUTURIST Institute, we want to raise awareness for sustainability and promote sustainable business. ESMT is the ideal place to win over the next generation of leaders for this path and to further stimulate the exchange of theory and practice.”

“With the Institute for Sustainable Transformation FUTURIST at ESMT, we are addressing one of today's most pressing issues together with our partners,” says Jörg Rocholl, president of ESMT. “Together, we want to contribute to the development of innovative solutions to global business and environmental challenges. In order to be able not only to communicate these, but also to implement them, we need to specifically promote dialogue between politics, business, and academia. The new institute offers us a great platform for this.”

“The attitude toward sustainability is clear: German CEOs want to make their companies climate neutral and transform along the three sustainability dimensions ESG,” Tobias Raffel, co-initiator of FUTURIST, managing director of the Werte-Stiftung, and author of the study *From Attitude to Action: How Germany's CEOs Put Their Companies on a Sustainability Course*, summarized the results from 20 CEO interviews. “However, decisive action to implement is still sometimes lacking.”

As the study found, nine out of ten top executives consider the issue of sustainability to be at least as important as digitalization in the next five years, and almost half even consider it to be more important. When it comes to transformation, one fundamental conflict of objectives is causing executives

headaches: In the eyes of 60 percent of respondents, sustainability and profitability are still opposites. The study lists ten steps that companies can use to systematize their path toward greater sustainability, regardless of the industry. “Companies will only really become more sustainable if the relevant steps are part of their corporate strategy and sustainability goals are integrated into operational management,” explained Stefan Wörner, Bain partner and co-author of the study.

During a panel discussion at COP26 in Glasgow yesterday, Deutsche Bank CEO Christian Sewing, Daimler CEO Ola Källenius, BASF CEO Dr. Martin Brudermüller, thyssenkrupp CEO Martina Merz, Harley-Davidson CEO Jochen Zeitz, and Schaeffler CEO Klaus Rosenfeld, among others, discussed the study findings. One conclusion: If German companies make even better use of the findings of science and cooperate across sectors, the transformation will progress more quickly.

Johan Rockström, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, emphasized just how strong the pressure to act is: “At the end of 2021, there is no longer any reason to doubt or hesitate. The accumulation of extreme weather events, the 6th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the continuing massive threat to nature and biodiversity make it unmistakably clear that only a climate-neutral society can still create prosperity in this world.”

More information about the institute may be found [here](#).

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About FUTURIST

The FUTURIST Institute for Sustainable Transformation at ESMT Berlin creates and shares knowledge to transform organizations, industries, and value chains towards sustainability. It was initiated by the non-profit Werte-Stiftung, the innovation platform FUTURY, and the business school ESMT and is based at ESMT. <https://esmt.berlin/futurist>

About ESMT Berlin

ESMT Berlin is the highest ranked business school in Germany and top 10 in Europe. Founded by 25 leading global companies, ESMT offers master’s, MBA, and PhD programs, as well as executive education on its campus in Berlin, in locations around the world, online, and in online blended format. Focusing on leadership, innovation, and analytics, its diverse faculty publishes outstanding research in top academic journals. Additionally, the international business school provides an interdisciplinary platform for discourse between politics, business, and academia. ESMT is a non-profit private institution of higher education, accredited by AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS, and FIBAA, and is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion across all its activities and communities. www.esmt.berlin

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