

**International conference
Hannah Arendt and the Promise of Europe**

*Hannah Arendt Initiative at
The European Humanities University
Imperial Hotel
Subačiaus g. 2, Vilnius, 11302 Vilnius m. sav.
January 15-16, 2026*

*The human world is always the product of man's amor mundi,
a human artifice whose potential immortality is always subject to the mortality of those
who build it and the natality of those who come to live in it
– Hannah Arendt, The Promise of Politics*

The end of World War II and especially the fall of the Soviet Empire gave rise to the notion of the "end of history." This conviction that the world was inevitably progressing toward political and moral advancement ushered in a new era of politics, one that elevated procedural and administrative governance while diminishing political will, individual responsibility, and meaningful political action.

Hannah Arendt warned against such developments. She foresaw the danger of reducing the state to an administrative machine, resolving conflicts through bureaucracy rather than political deliberation, arguing that this would not lead to the abolition of politics, but rather to a new form of despotism on a massive scale.

Today, the lack of will to defend the European values on one hand, and the growing polarization, the rise of authoritarian and anti-democratic populist movements, and the erosion of both the rule of law and public trust in governments across the West. These trends can be seen as a backlash against depoliticization and as an attempt by the masses to reclaim the public sphere. These shifts raise urgent questions about the future of Europe. Furthermore, the return of war to the European continent shattered the illusions of this "end of history" mindset. The reemergence of political violence and the use of force exposed the limitations of a worldview that sought to depoliticize public life. With these challenges in mind, we must ask: does politics, rooted in individual responsibility and action, still hold meaning?

Reflecting on the horrors of the 20th century - the rise of totalitarianism, world wars, and the Holocaust, Arendt argued that the promise of politics lies in human freedom and greatness. Real freedom, she maintained, emerges only through action, especially in seemingly impossible circumstances, when individuals resist oppression and defy the odds. In the political realm, we can be truly free - not driven by inner compulsions or bound by material necessity. For Arendt, freedom exists only in the unique and fragile space of political life.

The conference aims to gather leading Arendt experts and researchers, relying on the philosophy of Arendt to think through 21st Europe's challenges, reflecting on several key questions: What can Arendt's political thought offer us today? How might her ideas of *natality*, *public space*, and *vita activa* help us reimagine a European politics marked by division and the return of power politics? Can her uncompromising defense of judgment and action reignite democratic discourse? What does it mean to defend Europe and European values today? Does Europe still possess the internal resources needed for political renewal and democratic cohesion? And finally, what could serve as a positive foundation for political life in an age increasingly defined by fear, polarization, and violence?

JANUARY 15, 2026

Time	Panel topic	Speakers
13:45 – 14:00	Opening Remarks	Opening by EHU Rector Vilius Šadauskas. Renatas Juška Scholarship Award Ceremony
14.00 – 15.30	Opening panel. The Promise of Politics: An Alternative to Politics of Fear, Violence, and War	<i>Joy in Times of Despair</i> , Roger Berkowitz, Hannah Arendt Centre for Politics and Humanity, Bard College, New York <i>Hannah Arendt and the Love of the World</i> , Chantal Delsol, University of Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée Moderator: Simona Merkinaitė, Hannah Arendt Initiative at European Humanities University
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee break	
16.00 – 17.30	Panel 2. Crises of the Republic	<i>Before the Crystal Forms: Analyzing and Responding to Pre-Totalitarian Elements Today</i> , Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen, University of Jyväskylä <i>The European Identity: the Legacy of Revolution and Civil Disobedience</i> , Laurynas Peluritis, Vilnius University <i>Losing the Agora: Digital Forms of Ancient Problems</i> , Arvydas Grišinas, The Lithuanian Institute of History Moderator: Simas Čelutka, Hannah Arendt Initiative at European Humanities University
18:00 – 18.30	Book Presentation	Belarus in Autoethnographic Narratives. The Art of Mercy Against Oblivion by Victor Martinovich
18.30 – 20.00	Dinner	

JANUARY 16, 2026

Time	Panel topic	Speakers
9.00 – 10.30	Panel 1: A Dialogue Between Europes	<i>Arendt, Patočka and the Promise of (Post-) Europe</i> , Ludger Hagedorn, Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna <i>Patočka: Idea and Praxis of Europe</i> , Dalius Jonkus, Vytautas Magnus University <i>The Testament of the Revolution. Reading Hannah Arendt in Kyiv</i> , Olivia Guaraldo, Hannah Arendt Center for Political Studies, University of Verona Moderator: Natascia Tosel, Hannah Arendt Center for Political Studies, University of Verona

10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break	
11.00 – 12.00	Lunch lecture: Thinking about Reality: A Paradigm Shift	<i>Common Sense Challenged by Reality</i> , Jean Marc Ferry, Professor Emeritus, University of Nantes, Université libre de Bruxelles, Paris-Sorbonne Moderator: Povilas Aleksandravičius, Hannah Arendt Initiative at European Humanities University
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch	
13.00 – 14.30	Panel 2: Enduring Tensions in the European <i>Vita Activa</i>	<i>The Disrupted Divide: Rethinking Public and Private in Arendt's Europe</i> , Viktoras Bachmetjevas, Vytautas Magnus University <i>The Promise of Federalism: Arendt and Europe Beyond National Sovereignty</i> , Daniele Bassi, Hannah Arendt Center for Political Studies, University of Verona Moderator: Laurynas Peluritis, Vilnius University
14.30 – 15.30	Afternoon lecture: Thinking about Reality: Intellectuals and Universities	<i>Intellectual Somnambulism</i> , Anatoli Mikhailov, European Humanities University Moderator: Victor Martinovich, European Humanities University
15.30 - 16.30	Panel 3: Hannah Arendt and Future of Europe: In search for a New Balance Between Politics and Morality	Open moderated discussion by Simona Merkinaitė, Simas Čelutka, Hannah Arendt Initiative at European Humanities University
16.30 – 17.00	Coffee break	
17.00 – 19.00	EHU Strategic session: Future of Humanities and the Life of University	Moderated by Anatoli Mikhailov, European Humanities University
19:00 – 21:00	Dinner	