

Media release

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Younger and older business leaders are split on whether companies should take a political stance

Nuremberg – A new report released today, *Voices of the Leaders of Tomorrow (VOLOT 2025)*, reveals that almost three out of four (74%) of younger leaders think companies should take a more active political role, which is shared by only 53% of older leaders. VOLOT 2025 is the latest iteration of an annual report conducted by the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions (NIM) in cooperation with the St. Gallen Symposium.

The report, which surveyed over 1,000 business leaders across the world during January and February 2025, sets the scene of running a company or team during a time of immense geopolitical change. However, 72% of younger business leaders perceive current geopolitical shifts as more significant that will lead to major, sustained disruption, compared to just 39% of older business leaders.

One of the potential reasons for such a wide split is due to more experienced leaders still largely (83%) trusting scenario planning and predictive analysis to manage geopolitical risks, but this confidence is shared by only 57% of younger leaders.

In fact, nearly half (49%) of older business leaders believe that current geopolitical changes will have a long-term positive impact on stability and prosperity, while just 8% have a pessimistic view of the impact of global power shifts and the dissolution of the world and trade order as we know it.

Three out of four older leaders believe that international coalitions, such as NATO and the EU, and reforms in global governance structures will foster a new era of global cooperation and stability. Similarly, many share the view that we will continue to see open trade agreements and cooperative economic policies in the future, creating robust, inclusive growth and interconnected markets.

In contrast, nearly two-thirds (62%) of younger leaders do not believe that open trade agreements and cooperative economic policies will create robust, inclusive growth and interconnected markets. Additionally, a majority of this group does not believe that

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international coalitions and reforms in global governance structures will foster a new era of global cooperation and stability.

Dr. Fabian Buder, Head of Future & Trends Research at NIM, said:

"Current global political developments indicate that ideas like cooperation and division of labour will have a harder time prevailing. Our survey reveals that many company leaders were surprised by these developments, even though they were foreseeable. Companies need to strategically position themselves better in the future and pay more attention to geopolitical developments."

Felix Rüdiger, Head Content & Research at St. Gallen Symposium, said:

"Experience is valuable, but it hinders when it clings to outdated models of thinking where bold realignment is needed. A concrete measure, as suggested by the study results, would be stronger involvement of young leaders in important decisions. They reveal a much more sober and apparently realistic view of global changes and the impact on stability and prosperity compared to their older counterparts."

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About the Study "Voices of the Leaders of Tomorrow"

The study "Voices of the Leaders of Tomorrow" annually surveys young talents from the international network of the St. Gallen Symposium as well as senior executives from the world's largest companies about their perspectives on the major issues of our time. This year's VOLOT study surveyed 800 aspiring young talents under 35 years old, the "Leaders of Tomorrow," and 275 experienced top managers from some of the world's largest companies were surveyed. VOLOT 2025 focuses particularly on the leadership dynamics between generations in the context of increasing geopolitical volatility and its direct impact on companies. The study is conducted by NIM in cooperation with the St. Gallen Symposium.

For more information, visit <https://to.nim.org/volot2025>

About the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions e.V.

The Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions e.V. (NIM) examines how consumer decisions are influenced by new technologies or societal trends and the application of behavioural science, and what micro- and macroeconomic impacts this has on the market and society. A better understanding of consumer decisions and their impacts helps society, companies, politics, and consumers make better decisions in the sense of a socio-ecological market economy and "prosperity for all."

NIM is the founder of GfK. For more information, visit www.nim.org and LinkedIn.

About the St. Gallen Symposium

The St. Gallen Symposium is one of the world's leading initiatives for cross-generational dialogue. The goal is to promote more responsible, long-term leadership, by fostering meaningful and critical engagement between generations. Founded in 1969, the initiative is driven by a team of about 25 students, the International Students' Committee, and a team of professionals, the St. Gallen Foundation for International Studies. The annual main symposium brings together around 700 senior executives from business and policy with 200 young change-makers from around the world at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. Through various impact projects, the organisation actively promotes sustainability and long-term thinking through intergenerational leadership.

For more information, visit <https://symposium.org/>, LinkedIn, Instagram, X, YouTube, and Facebook.