

# European Wasatia Graduate School Co-Hosts *European Future Talks* during Europe Week at Europa-Universität Flensburg

Flensburg, 4 May 2026

The European Wasatia Graduate School is pleased to co-host the European Future Talks as part of this year's Europe Week at Europa-Universität Flensburg. Following previous Future Talks in Rome and Cambridge, the 2026 forum brings together scholars, policymakers, and civil society actors to address one of the most pressing challenges of our time: safeguarding European democracy. This year's discussions focus on how democratic societies can protect themselves—and human dignity—against manipulation and abuse, while upholding fundamental rights and ensuring that freedom of expression and information remains both strong and responsibly exercised in the digital age.



European democracy is facing unprecedented pressure. Beyond internal challenges, it is increasingly targeted by foreign information manipulation and interference, as well as coordinated disinformation campaigns driven by authoritarian systems. These strategies exploit digital technologies to undermine public trust, distort democratic discourse, and weaken institutions. At the heart of every liberal democracy lies a delicate balance: protecting freedom of speech and access to information while safeguarding human dignity and democratic stability. Across Europe, this balance is under strain. Debates around hate speech and polarization are intensifying, testing the boundaries of lawful expression. At the same time, major technology companies exert growing influence over public discourse through opaque algorithms that shape what citizens see and engage with online. The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence further amplifies these dynamics, raising new ethical and political questions.



Simultaneously, concerns are emerging about overly intrusive state regulation. While intended to counter harmful content and disinformation, such measures risk limiting legitimate dissent and critical voices—cornerstones of democratic life.

The European Future Talks 2026 aim to foster dialogue on these tensions and to explore pathways for strengthening resilient, open, and rights-based democratic societies in Europe.