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5 **Michael Vassiliadis**

6 **Chairman**

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9 **Keynote speech at the 8th IGBCE Congress**

10 **21 October 2025**

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12 **- The spoken word applies -**

13

14 **Introduction**

15 Dear colleagues,

16 We in Germany and Europe are in the midst of a very deep and fundamental crisis –
17 that is no secret.

18 Economic crises are always crises of justice.

19 They threaten freedom, self-confidence and future prospects.

20 And they hit those who create value every day – our people – first.

21 But we can overcome stagnation and regression.

22 That is why I do not want to dwell on lengthy descriptions.

23 Instead, we must focus on what needs to be done now to get back on the path
24 of growth, progress and justice.

25

26 We must now set the right priorities, with the perspective of our members and
27 employees, not from the windows of the executive suites.

28

29 Not sometime. Not somewhere. Not anything.

30 Now is the time **to "do the right thing – clearly, strongly, in solidarity"**.

31 **a. Our opportunity: industrial craftsmanship "Made in Germany"**

32 The good news is that, despite everything, we have better chances than many others to move forward
again.
33 get ahead again.

34 Germany is the home of industrial craftsmanship.

35 In our workshops and laboratories, in our factories, at universities and in
36 development centres.

37 And everywhere you look, something is being created that cannot be digitised:

38 experience, skill, responsibility.

39 That is the stuff that "Made in Germany" is made of.

40 We need to revitalise this. Because "Made in Germany" is more than just a seal of approval.

41 It is a promise for the future. Even in digitalisation.

42 Artificial intelligence can be used to enhance holiday photos.

43 That's nice.

44

45 But in our industries, AI can – if it is comprehensively unionised and

46 legally structured –_ to become beneficial industrial intelligence.

47 A "SAI", as I like to call it: Sustainable Artificial Intelligence.

48 For people. For businesses. For the environment.

49 This is the German path to transformation. With increasing productivity, but

50 without attacking jobs and working conditions.

51 But one thing is also clear: we cannot do this alone.

52 But with Europe.

53 Europe is not a foreign country – it is our domestic market of opportunities.

54 Our common space for innovation, strong enough to compete fairly with

55 other regions of the world.

56 But this requires decisions on the direction to take – courage, consistency and

57 realism.

58 And no one should say it can't be done.

59 We have the potential to assert ourselves.

60 It is possible if we want it to be, if we do the right thing.

61 We play in the Champions League of industrial value creation – and we do so year

62 year after year for the title of innovation and quality.

63 And we do so with people who are highly educated, with the top performers of this

64 country and the driving force behind our progress.

65 This is made possible by co-determination, collective bargaining agreements and trade union

66 organisation.

67 This is the foundation of a modern, high-performance industry.

68 This is our concept for the future of Germany.

69 A social market economy with backbone,

70 Instead of capitalism without conscience.

71 **b. Germany's strengths as a business location versus arbitrariness and unpredictability**

72 One of our country's greatest strengths is its people:

73 ☐ their qualifications,

74 ☐ their reliability,

75 ☐ their diligence,

76 ☐ but also the stability of this location.

77 A location you can rely on.

78 Anyone who is thinking aloud about leaving again these days should ask themselves honestly

79 : Is the arbitrariness of a Trump administration really more reliable than the

80 predictability of the German constitutional state?

81 Is an investment location in a country with one-party rule,

82 surveillance and censorship, really a secure basis for innovation in the future?

83 ☐ How stable is a society that organises fear instead of freedom?

84 ☐ How secure are know-how and patents when the state itself becomes a
85 a competitor?

86 ☐ And how sustainable are Chinese locations in a world of growing
87 trade conflicts?

88 It is high time for a strategic reassessment to begin in the boardrooms

89 .

90 Away from short-term cost logic, towards long-term location responsibility.

91 Because over the last two decades, many places have become too complacent

92 .

93 ☐ They have simply milked the cow instead of courageously developing ideas for tomorrow.

94 ☐ Bonuses have been collected instead of delivering visions for value creation here at home.

95 .

96

97 Let me be clear: we should expect more from highly paid company executives
98 than just managing the status quo.

99 Your home country can expect you to conceive and shape the future here, rather than
100 cost management and staff cuts.

101 And because there is often no movement without pressure, we will now accelerate the rethinking
102 process
103 :

103 In the coming months, we will be holding discussions in all supervisory boards

104 in which we bear responsibility, we will relaunch the debate on the prospects for our domestic
105 European locations and investment strategies,

106 colleagues.

107 We must tackle this now, and we must be united. The IGBCE, the works councils and
108 The supervisory boards. Determined, well prepared and persuasive.

109 We will make clear what we expect:

- 110 ☐ Loyalty to the location.
- 111 ☐ Courage to invest.
- 112 ☐ Responsibility for employment.

113 Especially now that the federal government is signalling its intention to make economic conditions
114 in Germany more attractive again, no one should sit on the fence.

115 Anyone who wants to be successful in Germany must also invest in Germany.

116 This is not an unreasonable demand that ignores capital market rules.

117 It is a question of responsibility, attitude and conceptual
118 skills.

119 **c. Goal: The most competitive chemical industry in the world – by 2045**

120 The coalition agreement states it in black and white: Germany wants to be the
121 Become the most competitive chemical industry in the world – by 2045.

122 That is a strong goal.

123

124 And it is good that the German government wants to go down this path together with us, with the
125 IGBCE and the trade associations.

126 But: a target on paper is not enough.

- 127 ☐ What is missing is momentum.
- 128 ☐ What is missing are clear signals that priorities are now being set as
- 129 reality demands.

130 Words do not create jobs. Investments do. Decisions do
131 do.

132 **d. Today's reality: consolidation, losses, stagnation**

133 Everyone here in this room knows how serious the situation is. Investment slump, migration,
134 staff cuts.

135 These are not headlines, this is everyday life in our companies.

136 Our works councils and union representatives are fighting day after day on the front line of this
137 crisis.

138 We are fighting with all our might for every job – and for the best possible
139 protection for our people.

140 There are many examples:

- 141 ☐ at the Bayer site in Frankfurt-Höchst as well as at the Felix
- 142 Schoeller paper factory in Penig.
- 143 ☐ At Britax Römer in Leipheim, as well as at the BASF sites in Cologne-
- 144 Knapsack and Frankfurt-Höchst.
- 145 ☐ And the list could be painfully continued.

146 The truth is that our largest industry, chemicals, is in the midst of a
147 consolidation phase that is threatening thousands of livelihoods.

148 And the situation is no better in the glass, paper, rubber, copper, aluminium, refractory,
149 fine ceramics, cement, plastics and leather industries.

150 We are losing plants. We are losing production. We are losing companies.

151 And the most bitter thing is that what is gone will not come back.

152

e. Our counter-model: maximum protection for our people

In this situation in particular, our members can rely on one thing:

We won't let anyone down. No one will be left in limbo.

Our benchmark is mining.

Where we have demonstrated what the prerequisites for socially just structural change.

That remains our line.

For all sectors in which the IGBCE bears responsibility.

We want

- that, in the event of a crisis, employees within a group of companies can be transferred to other fields of activity within a group of companies in the event of a crisis.
- that further training and retraining become the norm, not the exception.
- that know-how and skilled workers are retained – beyond regional employment pools.

Together with the BAVC, we will support this with collective bargaining policy.

With our skilled worker radar, we already have a tool that shows where Opportunities exist and how they can be exploited through social partnership.

After all, times of crisis always put social partnership to the test.

We do not see social partnership as an appendage to cost management, but as a democratic principle of participation – in times of economic upturn as well as in times of crisis.

That is why I say quite clearly:

Adidas' withdrawal from the regional collective agreement was an attack.

An attack on democracy in the world of work,

- on co-determination,
- on collective bargaining autonomy, workers' rights and respect.

181 And such attacks will not go unanswered.

182 I already said a few things about this yesterday.

183 But we also say: The future of good working conditions is not solely dependent on
184 individual collective agreements.

185 It depends on attitude and a sense of responsibility on both sides of the
186 the negotiating table.

187 That is why we expect employers to take this responsibility seriously
188 .

189 Not with lip service.

190 But with joint concepts for secure employment, for training,
191 and investment in the future.

192 Even and especially in times of crisis, social partnership must make a difference for
193 employees.

194 Immediately after this congress, we will launch a new initiative together with the BAVC.
195 initiative.

196 To re-establish social partnership as a universal democratic principle
197 of cooperation in the world of work.

198 ☐ We want to know whether and how we can preserve and develop the creative power of the
past
199 and develop it further.

200 ☐ We want to create reliability and prepare for disruptions to the
201 partnership.

202 We will distinguish very carefully between those who uphold the values and principles of the
203 partnership and who does not.

204 Those who choose to enter into conflict with us will feel the strength, unity and
205 consistency of the organisation.

206

207 **f. Protection through the welfare state – optimise and guarantee**

208 Dear colleagues,

209 our members – the employees in our factories, laboratories and
 210 Administrations – account for €240 billion in added value and €90 billion in government revenue every
 211 billion euros in government revenue.

212 And in return, they have a right to full support from the state in the event of a crisis
 213 from the state.

214 That is why it does not fit into the picture when people are now talking again about the
 215 welfare state is "unaffordable".

216 And it certainly does not fit when some people act as if employees are too
 217 lazy, too sick or too expensive.

218 The truth is: just because the people in our industries are so productive, so
 219 reliable and responsible – that is the only reason why this
 220 country work at all.

221 Now is the time to send a signal that the payback is right too.

222 A signal that performance is recognised and lifetime achievements are protected.

223 We demand:

- 224 • A firm promise: the pension level will remain at 48 per cent
 225 for everyone.

226 That is what is at stake now – a cross-generational promise of
 227 reliability.

228 This is the counter-model to the much-cited "painful reforms" at
 229 at the expense of those who have worked hard all their lives! –

- 230 • And this also means that anyone who has paid contributions for 45 years must continue to
 231 be able to retire without any reductions, dear colleagues!
 232 There must be a difference between someone who studied until the age of 35 and someone
 233 who started
 started vocational training at 18.

234 And:

235 No one who has worked for decades, paid contributions and taken on responsibility
 236 should suddenly have to queue up for citizen's income.

237 Now it's time to focus on our people again!

238

239 That is why we demand:

- 240 • Anyone over the age of 50 who has paid contributions for 20 years or more must
- 241 be entitled to at least 36 months of unemployment benefits.
- 242 • And those who still fall into basic social security should not lose everything they have
- 243 built up.

244 Exempt assets, housing and private pension provisions must be protected, especially for
245 the elderly.

246 We therefore call on the federal government: hands off exempt assets!

247 No cuts to exempt assets!

248 Yes – we want people to find work again.

249 But if that doesn't work, then something must remain of their lifetime achievements
250 .

251 That is how we understand the welfare state.

252 This is how employees understand justice and dignity.

253 In addition, we expect the state to actively support collectively agreed additional benefits
254 for social security.

255 Just as we have demonstrated with occupational pension schemes or supplementary care insurance
256 long-term care.

257 This is a modern, expandable and sustainable model:

258 relieving the burden on the welfare state through strong collective bargaining.

259 And politicians must finally recognise, promote and reward this with tax breaks.

260 That would be far better than repeatedly unsettling people with new rounds of austerity measures
261 .

262 **g. Strengthen the welfare state – don't badmouth it**

263 Of course, we know that demographic change poses challenges for the welfare state
264 .

265 As the number of older people rises, so do the costs of

266 pension, health and nursing care insurance.

267 That is the reality.

268 But in this situation, on the one hand, billions are being spent on unnecessary new benefits
269 How to fund the mothers' pension, and on the other hand, demanding benefit cuts for
270 everyone is a strange logic, colleagues.

271 It would be much more important to finally tap into the rationalisation reserves in the system:

- 272 ☐ through decisive digitalisation and the implementation of electronic
- 273 patient records,
- 274 ☐ through hospital reform that is no longer based on parochial thinking
- 275 ,
- 276 ☐ and through stronger prevention that stops illnesses before they
- 277 requiring expensive treatment.

278

279 Our welfare state is not unaffordable. On the contrary: it is essential for survival.

280 And there is still a lot of potential for efficiency in the system. But as long as this is not
281 is not exploited, benefit cuts are unjustifiable.

- 282 ☐ The welfare state is not a charitable favour that can be granted or denied.
- 283 ☐ It is social property, earned and deserved through contributions and taxes.
- 284 ☐ The welfare state knows no supplicants – only those who are entitled to benefits.

285 That is why I ask you:

286 Stand up when the welfare state is disparaged.

287 Do not allow it to be discredited.

288 Because that always affects our people.

- 289 ☐ The single mother who can only work part-time.
- 290 ☐ The skilled worker who suddenly finds himself out of work at 60.
- 291 ☐ Or the carer who can barely make ends meet.

292

293 We should make the everyday perspective of our people the benchmark.

294 Not the media spectacle and not the party political calculations.

295 I also miss this in the discussions about citizen's income and basic income support.

296 It goes without saying that people in our country must abide by the rules
297 .

298 This applies to road traffic as well as to working life or as a recipient of social
299 benefits.

- 300 ☐ But why is this suddenly at the centre of the debate on citizen's income?
- 301 ☐ Why are we no longer talking about the fact that job placement is far too
- 302 succeeds?
- 303 ☐ Why are we no longer talking about the fact that employment offices are understaffed
- 304 Why are we no longer talking about the lack of training opportunities and
- 305 ☐ Why are we no longer talking about the lack of training opportunities and about
- 306 A lack of opportunities to catch up on school qualifications?

307 These would indeed be effective measures to get people off basic income support
308 .

309 I don't believe in pseudo-solutions that ultimately only provoke the next call for
310 benefit cuts.

311 After all, benefit cuts, for example in the health care system, always mean
312 ultimately only one thing:

313 the privatisation of risks.

314 Those who can afford it buy their way out.

315 Everyone else is left behind.

316 This divides society and destroys trust in fairness.

317 We want the opposite!

318 A strong welfare state – clear in its analysis, strong in its conclusions,
319 and united in action.

320 Doing the right thing: **clear. Strong. United.**

321 **h. The right priorities – a holistic industrial policy**

322 Dear colleagues,

323 Anyone discussing the future of the welfare state must also discuss industry.

324 After all, a strong welfare state needs a strong economy – and vice versa.

325 All financing issues relating to our social security system depend on

- 326 ☐ whether the number of people in employment is rising or falling,
- 327 ☐ whether good collective bargaining agreements form the basis –
- 328 ☐ or whether we are content with mini-jobs, temporary work and low wages.

329 This is another reason why it is clear that we must overcome the economic crisis –
330 with policies that finally bring together growth, innovation and good jobs
331 together.

332 It is a misconception that one can save one's way out of the crisis or do so at the expense of
333 employees.

334 The opposite is true:

- 335 ☐ The only way out of the crisis is to invest in good jobs.
- 336 ☐ With more full-time work instead of compulsory part-time work.
- 337 ☐ With better childcare, so that families have real freedom of choice.
- 338 ☐ With qualifications for all instead of an education system that leaves young people
339 without qualifications.

340 This is not a luxury – it is location policy in the social market economy.

341 Let's play to our strengths:

342 A market economy in which social issues are a top priority.

343 An economy that sees people, co-determination and sustainability not as
344 obstacles, but as strengths.

345 The focus of business and politics must now be clearly and uncompromisingly on one
346 goal: to emerge from recession and stagnation.

347 Enter a new phase of industrial renewal.

348 Everything else is secondary.

349 And this must finally be reflected in the actions of the federal government.

350 This message was conveyed to the Chancellor yesterday, and we will
351 to the Vice-Chancellor tomorrow.

352 Our people have a very good sense of whether a government is
353 the essentials or is getting bogged down in details.

354 That is why we are calling for a holistic industrial policy – for Germany and for
355 Europe.

356 If we fail to achieve this, we will lose not only prosperity, but also
357 confidence in our ability to shape the future.

358 It is good that there are now industry talks – steel, automotive.

359 And yes, now also on the chemical industry and the implementation of the chemical and
360 pharmaceutical agenda
of the Federal Government.

361 The Ministry of Economic Affairs has announced a summit on this topic for the beginning of the year
362 . And on Thursday of this week, all MPs will meet in Mainz
363 .

364 The topics are the current situation in the chemical industry and the announcements regarding the
365 Chemical industry location 2045 in the German government's coalition agreement.

366 Don't worry: I will of course be there when it comes to the future of our
367 chemical industry, and I will join in digitally from here.

368 That's good for now, but it's not enough.

369 Such summits are important – but they are no substitute for a concept.

370 A sustainable industry needs integrated value chains and
371 strategic planning.

372 **i. Securing value chains – the key to strength**

373 After all, the backbone of our economy is the industrial network in Germany
374 and Europe.

375 This close interconnection between industries is no coincidence; it is the reason why
376 our industry has been the number one driver of innovation for decades.

377 What will become of the German automotive industry if, in future, windscreen,
378 tyres, seats, batteries and electronics come entirely from China in the future?

379 What will remain of the value of "Made in Germany"?

380 And this is not a pipe dream – it is already happening today.

381 The electric cars with which China is pushing into Europe do not carry a single component
382 "Made in Germany".

383 That's why I say quite clearly:

- 384 ☐ Without our chemical and plastics industry,
- 385 ☐ without our glass manufacturers, tyre factories, ceramics and leather companies,

386 □ Without these industrial cornerstones, Germany will lose its
387 innovative strength.

388 Without us, nothing will work here soon. That must not happen – and it will not
389 not happen.

390 Because we know how to organise value creation, how to ensure quality,
391 and how to combine jobs with a future.

392

393 **j. Stabilising businesses and employment – paths to new growth**

394 Dear colleagues,

395 What needs to be done is actually quite obvious.

396 Germany must once again become a country where industry is worthwhile.

397 The home-grown location problems must finally be addressed.

398 Our production conditions must be attractive enough to allow our strengths
399 – industrial craftsmanship – can flourish once again.

400 For energy- and CO₂-intensive industries, this means that we finally need
401 competitive energy and CO₂ prices.

402 For the chemical industry, this also means stabilising our chemical parks –
403 they are the backbone of industrial value creation.

404 These are not luxury demands, they are emergency measures to get our
405 industries out of the intensive care unit of industrial policy.

406 **k. Competitive energy – now, not sometime in the future**

407 What the federal government has achieved so far is not enough.

408 Yes – the reduction in electricity tax, the abolition of the gas storage levy,

409 and, from 2026, a subsidy for grid fees – these are all small steps forward.

410 But they do not change the core of the problem: industrial electricity in Germany
411 costs twice as much as in our competitor countries.

412 This is putting our businesses at risk. Every day. And every day we lose
413 jobs.

414 That is why we are calling for:

415 1. Grid expansion is part of the public infrastructure.

416 But why is it billed per kilowatt hour consumed?

417 And why must the costs of this project of the century be financed in just a few years
418 financed through these levies and not spread over the depreciation period
419 ?

420 When it comes to motorways, we don't calculate their construction costs based on the number
421 of kilometres driven either.
Kilometres.

422 2. Electricity price compensation for energy-intensive businesses must be immediately
423 and extended.
424

425 3. And we actually need an effective industrial electricity price by the beginning of the year at the
latest

426 industrial electricity price.

427 The three times 1.3 billion euros promised by the Chancellor yesterday are an
428 important step, but certainly not enough to achieve competitive
429 conditions.

430 From today's perspective, this means that

431 We will have to continue to mobilise, otherwise good jobs in
432 our industries will fall victim to such distortions in competition.

433 Of course, it costs money to bring energy prices to a competitive level
434 .

435 But it costs much more money not to do it.

436 And quite frankly, anyone who has money to subsidise agricultural diesel

437 and reduce VAT in the catering industry should not tell us
438 that there is no money for industrial jobs.

439 Because when industrial workers become unemployed, they are no longer
440 also be missing as guests for restaurateurs – and then lower taxes won't help either.

441 **I. Make CO₂ costs fair – otherwise climate protection will lose its basis**

442 Another massive competitive disadvantage is the CO₂ price.

443 In China, a tonne of CO₂ costs one-seventh of what we pay.

444 In Japan, it costs one-seventieth. And in large parts of the USA, it costs nothing at all.

445 The fact that others are lagging behind is disastrous in terms of climate policy – but it does not help us
in
446 competition.

447 After all, what could be more absurd than the most climate-friendly production being
448 is forced out of the market because it is taxed the most?

449 That is why we are calling for the Federal Government to present a solution by the end of the year
450 .

451 Particularly CO₂-intensive companies must receive free
452 certificates again from 2026 onwards. This will help many who are currently in dire straits – and
without
453 any investment planning for our sites. We attach clear conditions to
454 free CO₂ certificates.

455 This must not be a free pass:

456 ☐ savings must be channelled into investments in locations and innovations.

457 ☐ And works councils must monitor this – because they know the businesses, because
458 they bear responsibility, and because they can replace bureaucracy with trust
459 .

460 If we don't manage to do this, there will soon be nothing left that could be transformed into
461 transformed into a climate-neutral future.

462 That is why I say: we are not attacking climate protection, we are defending it against
463 a misguided climate policy.

464 Only when competitiveness, climate protection and social security are in balance
465 , will transformation have a chance.

466 This is not just a dispute over a few percentage points more or less.

467 It is about nothing less than the work and life prospects of our
468 and their families.

469

470

471

472 **Chemical parks – an endangered but crucial advantage**

473 Dear colleagues

474 There are strong structural reasons why the chemical industry in Germany will continue to play a leading role in the future.

475 play a leading role in the future:

476 ☐ It is a driver of innovation, a supplier of raw materials and a driver of sustainability.

477 ☐ It is a strategic security reserve for Germany and Europe.

478 ☐ And it is linked to a tradition of research that is unrivalled anywhere in the world

479 unparalleled worldwide.

480 This is particularly evident in our chemical and industrial parks.

481 These integrated production networks are unique worldwide.

482 Here, material flows, energy flows and expertise intertwine.

483 What is waste for one is a raw material for another.

484 That is efficiency made in Germany.

485 But it is precisely this system that is now under threat.

486 If just one component breaks down – for example, due to the decommissioning of a
487 steam cracker in Böhlen or Schkopau,

488 or a refinery in Gelsenkirchen or Cologne-Godorf –

489 the entire structure will collapse.

490 This means that thousands of jobs are at risk, not only in the chemical industry, but also in
491 plastics processing, packaging and mechanical engineering.

492 That is why I say clearly: the future of chemical parks is not a side issue – it is
493 purely a matter of location policy. If politicians only start to take care of things with a "Chemistry
Agenda 2045",

494 , it will be too late for many jobs.

495 We must act now. Chemical parks are not a thing of the past; they are
496 the number one resilience factor in our industry. And if necessary, the
497 government must ensure their continued existence through public-private partnerships or new
operating companies.

498 ensure their continued existence.

499

500 We will put this issue on the political agenda before the end of this year
501 .

502 And we will forge new alliances – with countries, local authorities, companies
503 and associations.

504 Because without chemical parks, there can be no strong industry, and without a strong industry, there
505 can be no strong country.

506 **n. Reassessment and realignment of climate policy**

507 Dear colleagues,

508 So far, the focus has been on immediate measures to stabilise jobs.

509 But that alone will not put us back on a sustainable path to success.

510 We need to address the root causes: why have we fallen behind? How can we reverse
511 the trend?

512 This can only be achieved with conceptual clarity.

513 And with the courage to readjust political guidelines.

514 This is what the federal government has been lacking so far: too little comprehensible rigour, too
515 few recognisable priorities.

516 The result: ongoing uncertainty, both in businesses and in families.

517 This is precisely where a reassessment of climate policy is needed.

518 Europe has reduced greenhouse gases more than any other industrialised region.

519 Germany is a pioneer – with only around 1.2% of global emissions.

520 That is right and important. But the price is high.

521 If climate policy leads to plants being shut down and production relocated in Germany
522 production is relocated, then that is not climate protection, but false labelling
523 – the emissions are simply being relocated.

524 And in the worst case, they are still increasing in other regions of the world.

525 But here, jobs and value creation are gone for good.

526

527 And yes: extreme weather, heavy rainfall, heat waves, forest fires – all of this is reality.

528 Climate protection is non-negotiable.

529 But climate policy that ignores competitiveness and social security destroys
530 its own foundation.

531 That is why we say:

532 ☐ We are not attacking climate protection.

533 ☐ We are correcting a climate policy that has become disconnected from the economy and the
welfare state

534 .

535 We need a new balance: competitiveness – climate protection –
536 social integration. Only when this triangle is stable will transformation succeed in
537 people's real lives.

538

539 **o. Promoting CCS – climate protection with leverage**

540 If you want to eliminate millions of tonnes of CO₂, you need CCS – period.

541 Heidelberg Materials is demonstrating what is possible with its plant in Brevik, Norway.

542 Germany has now created the legal framework for this.

543 That's good.

544 Now we need to pick up the pace:

- 545 • Accelerate approvals,
- 546 • Establish a funding framework,
- 547 • Plan infrastructure (transport and storage).

548 Yes, CCS costs money. But doing nothing will be more expensive – both ecologically and industrially.

549 **p. Energy transition monitoring – combining goals with reality**

550 The monitoring report on the energy transition is finally available.

551 The bottom line: too expensive, too bureaucratic, too ambitious, without a solid foundation.

552 We have been saying for years: goals, timetables and prerequisites must
553 be aligned.

554 Take the basic materials industry, for example: it is supposed to be climate-neutral by 2040. But customers in

555 Germany, however, are to have until 2045, and those in Europe until 2050, to decide
556 whether or not to pay more for climate-neutral products.

557 This is effectively a programme to promote imports and relocate production.

558 Ecologically pointless, economically fatal.

559 Take hydrogen, for example: the target of 10 GW of domestic production by 2030 is
560 unrealistic, at least if you rely solely on green energy.

561 The consequence of this must be: prioritise!

- 562 ☐ First, introduce hydrogen into industrial processes where it can replace energy and
- 563 raw material – in chemicals, refineries and steel production.
- 564 ☐ Start with an open technology approach (blue/turquoise/green) so that scales and networks
- 565 can be established.
- 566 ☐ Plan network expansion in parallel, not sequentially.

567 As long as H₂ is significantly more expensive than natural gas, companies will not invest in the
568 necessary

569 That is why incentives are needed to create more momentum:

- 570 • Start-up aid for electrolysis,
- 571 • import corridors to North Africa, the Middle East, Norway,
- 572 • and a smart subsidy logic that triggers investment rather than PowerPoint presentations
- 573 slides.

574 Quote:

575 "No climate-neutral industrialised country without hydrogen – but no
576 hydrogen."

577 **q. New opportunities – new self-confidence**

578 Germany can shape the future: top specialists, strong research, rule of law,
579 democracy, an efficient welfare state. With the 500 billion special fund
580 , we can modernise infrastructure and trigger growth. Our
581 huge opportunity lies in the circular economy:

- 582 • Chemical recycling of plastics, as practised by Lyndon Basel in Wesseling
- 583 ensures consistent quality and reduces dependence on imports.

584

585 ☐ Tyre pyrolysis, as practised by Pyrum Innovations in Dillingen, returns gas, oil and carbon black

586 back into the material cycle.

587 ☐ And when straw is converted into pulp, as is the case at Essity in Mannheim,
588 agricultural residues are being put to intelligent use.

589 The technologies are there – but the right conditions are lacking:

590 ☐ recycling quotas,

591 ☐ green procurement,

592 ☐ CO₂ border adjustment,

593 ☐ reliable investment paths.

594 And: we must leverage our life science advantage!

595 Pharma and biotech are key to the industry of tomorrow: mRNA platforms,

596 new bioprocesses, material innovations. This is where highly skilled jobs are created –

597 and sovereignty in health and care.

598 The healthcare industry as a whole has a crucial role to play in an ageing society and as a

599 Field of innovation with enormous potential, benefiting particularly from the

600 opportunities offered by digitalisation, if they are properly integrated.

601 **r. Protection against environmental dumping – fair instead of naive**

602 Anyone who wants to sell in Europe must produce cleanly – even as an importer.

603 Therefore:

604 ☐ Binding quotas for recycled materials in products – for everyone.

605 ☐ Those who do not meet them pay a levy at least equal to the
606 environmental benefit they save themselves.

607 ☐ And where Brussels or Berlin hesitate, there needs to be full
608 compensation for disadvantages for companies that produce sustainably.

609 That is transformation in concrete terms – not just announcements.

610 **See Resilience as a safeguard for the future – strategically strengthening Europe**

611 Europe must not be crushed between US tariff policy and waves of Chinese subsidies
612 be crushed.

613 Resilience means increasing independence, diversifying partnerships and
614 expanding strategic sovereignty.

615

616 This includes:

- 617 • Finally implementing the Mercosur Agreement – fairly, with standards, but without
618 endless procrastination.
- 619 • Make consistent use of the raw materials agreement with Canada – batteries,
620 permanent magnets, rare earths.
- 621 • Assessing our own resources wisely: potash for food and industry,
622 North Sea gas meeting the highest safety standards as a bridging contribution,
623 Geothermal-coupled lithium from the Upper Rhine – innovative rather than ideological.

624 And we need a semiconductor chemistry strategy: Europe is dependent on high-purity
625 chemicals for chips. German companies could build up their own capacities
626 – but politicians must initiate this with incentives, targets and
627 order bundling.

628 Quote: "Resilience is not a buzzword. Resilience is job protection."

629

630 **t. Employee- and employment-oriented economic policy**

631 Dear colleagues,

632 Economic and industrial policy in Germany must once again focus on people
633 – not the markets, not profits, but
634 employees and their future.

635 This applies to Germany – and equally to Europe. Because an economy that
636 Employees are the most stable form of prosperity policy.

637 **Europe needs conditions – not arbitrariness**

638 Therefore, in future, the following must apply: anyone who wants to sell on the European market must
also produce, invest and create jobs here.

639 also produce, invest and create jobs here. This is not
640 protectionist rhetoric, it is realism.

641 China has built its economy in exactly the same way – except that today Beijing is flooding
642 flooding the world markets with subsidised overproduction.

643 This is not fair competition; it is industrial dumping on a global scale.

644 That is why we also need binding local content regulations to ensure that
645 value creation remains in Europe and so that our automotive suppliers, our
646 Chemistry, our mechanical engineers are not falling victim to global
647 subsidy strategies.

648 And it is also clear that the £500 billion programme to modernise our
649 infrastructure is intended to strengthen Europe, not to fuel the economy elsewhere.

650 ☐ That is why we also need binding local content regulations
651 ☐ so that value creation remains in Europe –
652 ☐ and so that our automotive suppliers, our chemical industry, our
653 mechanical engineering companies do not fall victim to global subsidy strategies
654 .

655 And it is also clear that the £500 billion programme to modernise our
656 infrastructure is intended to strengthen Europe, not to fuel the economy elsewhere.

657 Contracts paid for with taxpayers' money should go to European companies first.

658 We stand shoulder to shoulder with IG Metall on this:

659 ☐ for fair contracting,
660 ☐ for good work,
661 ☐ for value creation here.

662 **Companies have a duty – modernisation instead of excuses**

663 But, colleagues, companies themselves must also deliver.

664 The decline in productivity has nothing to do with the work performance of our people
665 . It has a lot to do with reluctance to invest.

666 For years, the opportunities offered by digitalisation have not been exploited. Artificial
667 intelligence remains a pilot project rather than a productive force.

668 The federal government has rolled out the red carpet for a major investment push by offering
companies super depreciation allowances.
669 has rolled out the red carpet for an investment offensive.

670 Now it is time for management to finally stand up and take action.

671 We at IGBCE will support any modernisation initiative that brings real
672 innovation and strengthens good work. We know what rationalisation can do –
673 but we also know what stagnation does.

674

675

676

677 **w. Securing the future of our industries – doing the right thing: clear. strong.**
 678 **Solidarity.**

679 Dear colleagues, in order to secure the future of our industries,
 680 it is now important to do the right thing – **clearly, strongly, in solidarity.**

681 In summary, this means:

682 1. Speed. Investment decisions must be made now. Not in 2030.
 683 Not after the next election. The framework conditions must be reliable
 684 so that confidence can return.

685 2. Strengthening Germany as an industrial location. We need massive investment in infrastructure,
 686 affordable energy and targeted innovation funding. The market alone cannot regulate this
 687 . When social stability is at stake, the state must
 688 intervene – decisively and strategically. And yes: access to the European
 689 market must be linked to production in Europe.

690 3. Secure chemical parks – strengthen resilience. Regional cycles and stable
 691 production of basic materials are the backbone of our industry. Chemical and
 692 Industrial parks are a national locational advantage that we must actively protect –
 693 politically, economically and through trade unions.

694 4. Shaping new, green markets. Transformation does not happen automatically.

695 We need clear guidelines and incentives: recycling quotas, "Made in Europe" bonuses,
 696 and public procurement law that rewards sustainability.

697 5. Prevent carbon leakage. Climate protection must not become a relocation trap.
 698 We call for a trade policy with teeth, effective CO₂ border adjustment,
 699 and clear measures against dumping practices.

700 6. Strengthen collective bargaining and co-determination. Works councils and trade unions
 701 must be involved at an early stage when it comes to new technologies,
 702 production processes or location strategies.

703 Because without co-determination there can be no transformation, and without collective bargaining
 agreements there can be no social

704 Stability. And that also includes: the regulation of chemicals and materials policy –
 705 REACH – must remain realistic and enable industrial innovation rather than
 706 preventing it. "If we take these principles to heart, we will not only secure
 707 jobs – we will renew the promise of progress of the social
 708 market economy in the 21st century."

709

710 **x. Invest or pay – the financial responsibility of large**
 711 **fortunes**

712

713 Dear colleagues,

714 Everything we are talking about this week – securing the future, infrastructure,
 715 transformation – costs money. A lot of money.

716 The 500 billion fund is a good start. But everyone knows that it will not be
 717 be enough.

718 At the same time, spending on the armed forces and security is rising, and
 719 in a world that has become more unstable.

720 So far, politicians have responded with more debt. That was justifiable, and it is
 721 manageable. But in the long term, debt policy is not a policy for the future. Because debts
 722 has to be serviced – and interest has to be paid too.

723 The only way out of this dilemma is to strengthen the revenue side.

724 And this is precisely why I am repeating what I said so clearly on Sunday at the opening
 725 our congress: Fair Future TAX!

726 A wealth tax would be an important building block for shouldering the special burdens of our
 727 . But one-off measures are not enough. We
 728 need a sustainable increase in revenue – fair, moderate, but effective:

- 729 • a higher inheritance tax,
 730 • a higher top tax rate,
 731 • the reintroduction of the wealth tax.

732 These are not radical ideas, they are instruments for responsibility and
 733 fairness.

734 And we are not impressed by those who immediately cry "envy debate!"

735 Because what is the alternative?

736 Cuts for employees. Reduction of social
 737 benefits.

738 We are not in favour of that.

739 We know that there is wealth in this country that is constantly growing – without
740 anyone having to work for it, except perhaps their own investment advisor.

741 Our people, on the other hand,

- 742 ☐ work day in, day out in factories, offices and laboratories,
- 743 ☐ raise children, care for relatives,
- 744 ☐ and get involved in clubs, fire brigades, churches and political parties.

745 And yet they still have to do the maths:

- 746 ☐ because nursery fees are due,
- 747 ☐ because rents are skyrocketing,
- 748 ☐ because their children do not receive student grants,
- 749 ☐ because they have to make their own provisions for old age.

750 Our people don't complain – but they shake their heads.

751 Because they have experienced that politicians repeatedly demand something from them – but do not
752 deliver anything themselves.
752 deliver.

753 This must finally come to an end.

754 It is time for performance to be recognised again and for wealth
755 assume responsibility.

756 The time for this is now. Because the new burdens must be distributed fairly.

757 No one can do this for us – we must fight this battle ourselves.

758 The good news is that two-thirds of people in Germany see it the same way. Even
759 among the CDU/CSU electorate.

760 We will take up this cause. We will fight for fair taxation of large fortunes
761 .

762 This is not ideology – it is social common sense.

763 Doing the right thing: **clear. strong. united.**

764

765

766 **y. Organised political crime versus democratic participation**

767

768 Dear colleagues, the struggle for justice is also a struggle for
769 democracy.

770 For an unholy alliance of autocrats, billionaires,
771 populists and right-wing movements is forming worldwide, and they are not only fighting democracy –
they are
772 hijack it.

773 Whether it's Trump, Erdogan or Orban, they all have one goal: to plunder the state
774 .

775 They declare opponents to be enemies, undermine the judiciary, suppress the media, and
776 poison public discourse with hatred, incitement and lies.

777 And anyone who thinks this has nothing to do with us is mistaken.

778 These methods – fake news, contempt, division – have long since found resonance here too
779 resonance. And they threaten our freedom, our culture of coexistence
780 and our trade union rights.

781 Because when democracy falls, the rights of workers are always the first to fall
782 and employees fall first.

783 In Hungary, there are three months of unemployment benefits. In the USA, the president defames
784 health care as communism. And in Germany?

785 The AfD votes against the minimum wage and the law on collective bargaining agreements, it wants to
abolish collective bargaining agreements
786 and wants to make wage determination competitive – that would mean no more collective bargaining
protection,
787 and solidarity gone.

788 Is it a coincidence that Alice Weidel is being supported by Elon Musk in her election campaign? No.

789 This is the new international alliance of organised political crime.

790 Tech companies in the United States are promoting Trump and his MAGA movement – and
791 reaping the rewards in the form of tax breaks and arms contracts. In Hungary,
792 followers of power benefit from corruption in the open.

793 Dear colleagues, these new right-wing leaders view the state
794 as prey.

795

796 And those who turn the state into prey rob people of their dignity and their
797 future.

798

799 This cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. Defending democracy is not
800 secondary contradiction, but self-protection.

- 801 • Protection of personal freedom.
- 802 • Protection of equality and solidarity.
- 803 • Protection of income and employment.
- 804 • Protection of the rights of the working population.

805 That is our mission as a trade union.

806 One may disagree with much of what the democratic parties achieve.

807 But one thing is clear: we must not allow our country to fall into the hands
808 mafia-like movements. We oppose this – with conviction, clarity and
809 and courage.

810 **Z. Organisational development – making our IGBCE strong**

811

812 Dear colleagues,

813 Our IGBCE is a strong trade union. And because that is the case, we must also be able to fulfil our
mandate without restriction in the future.

814 be able to fulfil our mission without restriction in the future.

815 We owe this to our history and our future.

816 We must and will remain the protective power of our members – and the driving force
817 of co-determination:

- 818 • in the workplace,
- 819 • in the industries,
- 820 • in the economy,
- 821 • politics and society.

822 But it is also clear that fulfilling this mandate is becoming increasingly challenging.

823 And there is no doubt that new approaches and changes are needed to achieve this.
824 core task future-proof.

825

826 The developments of recent years demand clarity and transparency about
827 what lies ahead:

- 828 ☐ Our membership numbers are declining and the membership structure is following the
829 demographic change – meaning fewer resources but
830 growing responsibilities.
- 831 ☐ And our industries are undergoing rapid transformation – everywhere is being
832 undergoing change, acceleration and digitalisation.

833 What's more, our industries are dependent on fragile political conditions.

834 Today, more than ever, our influence on politics determines the
835 employment and development prospects of our industry.

836 But also whether we enter the future stronger or weaker.

837 I have talked about the fact that our industries have a bright future
838 – but I also made it clear that this cannot be taken for granted.

839 On the contrary: it needs us – a capable, competent and consistent
840 IG BCE!

841 Therefore, even with scarcer resources, we can and must gain strength
842 by keeping ourselves fit for the future and making ourselves fit for the future.

843 This means:

- 844 ☐ we must be up to date at the core of our work – competent,
845 efficient, effective.
- 846 ☐ We must deploy our forces where they can have an impact – in
847 our members, in our industries, in networks, in new
848 target groups.
- 849 ☐ We need the best staff and committed, competent volunteers.
- 850 ☐ We need excellent and fast member services and an
851 administration that unleashes potential rather than restrains it.
- 852 ☐ Digitalisation with maximum member proximity is not a threat, but a
853 mission to become better.

854 We are not a business – and we do not want to be one.

855 But we are not a government agency either.

856 Lengthy, over-organised processes, back and forth between departments, that
857 are not characteristics of a democratic organisation.

858 It is simply a waste of future potential.

859

860 We have known this for some time.

861 We have been analysing this intensively for some time now, and we have developed alternatives and
new

862 approaches.

863 Now we must implement what is necessary: more clearly, more consistently, and more quickly than in
864 the past. And we are already starting to do so at this conference.

865 We have already presented the advisory board with a clear analysis of how demographics and
866 membership trends are changing our organisation.

867 The mandate for action is clear:

- 868 ☐ We must secure strength in co-determination,
- 869 ☐ membership in companies must grow and, at the same time,
- 870 ☐ we must organise new, untapped companies.

871 We are now also conducting the litmus test here at the congress to see whether we can meet our
872 own standards:

- 873 ☐ We are presenting you with one of the most comprehensive revisions of the statutes since
874 the merger.
- 875 ☐ We are introducing a simpler, clearer contribution system. It does not generate
876 additional income, but it does offer greater transparency, attractiveness and resilience to
conflict.
- 877 ☐ And we are proposing a new structure for financing district and
878 regional trade union work – a topic that has been discussed more intensively than many
others
879 topic in recent years.

880 As part of the merger of the regional districts in North Rhine-Westphalia, we will
881 use the future laboratory that has been created there to test new forms of productive
882 division of tasks

- 883 ☐ for better member support,
- 884 ☐ better operational support,
- 885 ☐ better service.

886 In doing so, we are consciously leaving our comfort zone.

887 We are changing our trade union reality and practice.

888 This is where decisions are made, necessary actions are taken, and implementation is united in
889 intensive dialogue.

890 Dear colleagues,

891 this consequence is necessary – and right.

892

893 Because the future is not created by PowerPoint presentations, but through the direct
894 cooperation between active and committed people.

895 So here's my request: let's do this – and let's continue to be consistent
896 . Support decisions. And disagree where it makes sense. But let us
897 Let us put an end to sitting on our hands and glossing over the problems facing our IGBCE.

898 Because there will be more to do.

899 Our organisation must:

- 900 ☐ fight even more decisively for strength at the local level.
- 901 ☐ deliver even more clearly on our performance promise to members and officials
- 902 ..,
- 903 ☐ and transfer the lessons learned from the North Rhine-Westphalia merger to the entire
904 organisation

905 We can be confident that we will achieve all of this because we are prepared to
906 invest in the future.

907 But, dear colleagues, a trade union does not change on its own
908 through better structures, technology or management.

909 All of these things are necessary, but they are not the core of the change.

910 Above all, it needs committed, active people

- 911 ☐ who are passionate about the cause,
- 912 ☐ who are willing to commit themselves and take on the burden,
- 913 ☐ who are prepared to fight for the right cause.

914 And change can only succeed if we all see ourselves as part of this change –
915 from experienced trade unionists to young officials, from volunteers to
916 full-time officials.

917 I know that some people see our organisation as cumbersome, too slow, too
918 complicated, and not open enough to new ideas. This must be an incentive for us. The next
919 generation of trade unionists brings energy, knowledge
920 and attitude.

921 and they rightly expect responsibility, creativity and prospects.

922 We will create new forms of cooperation to achieve this. Interdisciplinary,
923 digital, learning, supportive. Because a strong IG BCE does not grow solely through
924 experience, it also grows through competence, innovation, agility and trust in
925 young, active trade unionists.

926 This is not just organisational development. It is generational development.
927 The youth have clearly shown us this in the advisory board: a modern trade union involves,
928 promotes, recognises talent, communicates intelligently, is capable of campaigning – and it gives
929 the next generation freedom and responsibility.

930 In view of demographic change, our organisation needs
931 people who – sooner than some of them believe today –
932 want to and are able to take on responsibility.

933 It depends on them whether the vision of a strong IGBCE in a completely
934 changed world.

935 And that is why we must and will invest even more in the development
936 our young people in the future.

937 But there is one thing, dear colleagues, that we should also be honest about: this
938 This naturally requires a clear vision and decision-makers who are prepared to think and act with the
939 future in mind.
939 .

940 We will ensure both.

941 Colleagues,

942 At the same time, we will intensify our work in the industry.

943 Until now, IG BCE has been organised primarily on a regional basis.

944 But we also need to become more familiar with industry-specific challenges,
945 identify them more quickly and address them in a more targeted manner.

946 As IG BCE, we want to become more visible – not only as a chemical industry union,
947 but also as a pharmaceutical, paper, energy, mining, glass, rubber,
948 fine ceramics, plastics and semiconductor union.

949 We are the strong union of the future for all these industries.

950 Where new industrial clusters emerge, we will pool our expertise locally –
951 for greater impact and proximity.

952 We are also launching a communication offensive: communication is not
953 It is not a one-way street, but rather a two-way process of sending and receiving.

954 Our communication campaign will help us to intensify contact with our members
955 members, better convey our values and play a prominent role in
956 societal debates.

957

958

959 Of course, there are gaps – areas where we are less strong, often
 960 younger, more female, more diverse, more academic.

961 We want to become stronger in these areas too.

962 In future, our use of resources will also be geared towards membership potential
 963 if the prospects of success justify it and if these prospects are confirmed in reality
 964 .

965 When we invest in potential members, it must be targeted and
 966 measurable.

967 And then it must also be assessed transparently and critically.

968 After all, these precious resources are lacking elsewhere and must not
 969 be allowed to go to waste.

970 Dear colleagues, one thing is clear: our collective bargaining work remains the focus
 971 of our union.

972 What we achieve here, in the cockpit of our future machine, must pay off –
 973 in terms of membership, approval and support.

974 Collective bargaining is not a service. It is creative power in action.

975 That is why the employers' associations' attempt to undermine collective bargaining coverage through
 OT memberships
 976 is an attack on all trade unions.

977 True social partnership only begins when employers' associations
 978 abuse. And remain loyal to their own existential mission: to help shape living and working conditions in
 979 free collective bargaining to help shape living and working conditions.

980 Until our IG BCE is organisationally future-proof, capable of fighting and comprehensively competent
 in all the new
 981 issues, we still have work to do.

982 But that is precisely how we see ourselves: we get things done – together.

983 That is why I invite you all to make the future of IG BCE your own
 984 cause!

985 Whether

- 986 ☐ on the main executive committee,
- 987 ☐ the advisory board,
- 988 ☐ in the regional districts,
- 989 ☐ in the local groups,
- 990 ☐ among the representatives or
- 991 ☐ in the groups of individuals –
- 992 ☐ Every idea counts, every commitment makes a difference.

993 We are changing.

994 But at its core, our IG BCE remains what it always was: an independent,
995 independent, competent and combative trade union for employees in
996 our industrial sectors.

997 Because we are needed – with our attitude, our experience, our
998 passion and our distinctive identity.

999 Dear colleagues,

1000 This speech began with industrial craftsmanship – the foundation of our
1001 prosperity and our self-image.

1002 This craftsmanship deserves recognition and attention. That is what our
1003 People, get ready.

1004 That is why we must once again raise social and political awareness
1005 that our industries are the driving force behind the country's progress.

1006 and that we set the standards for good work in our industries, with co-determination
1007 and secured by collective agreements.

1008 We must offer our members and the employees in our industries
1009 self-confidence and pride in their work.

1010 Nothing we stand for is outdated.

1011 On the contrary, we work every day to build a better future.

- 1012 • With a clear vision of a just, social and
1013 democratic society.
- 1014 • With compelling concepts for efficient and sustainable
1015 industry.
- 1016 • With and for our members.

1017 There is only one way out of the crisis:

1018 **Doing the right thing. Clearly. Strongly. In solidarity.**

1019 Good luck!