UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG

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EUPRERA ANNUAL CONGRESS

15–18 SEPTEMBER 2027



CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

LEIPZIG2027.COM

Innovations in Public Relations and Strategic Communication

Exploring New Frontiers for Research and the Profession

THE CONGRESS

The EUPRERA Annual Congress is the leading European platform for exchanging knowledge, discussing emerging trends, exploring innovative methods and disseminating the latest research outcomes in public relations and strategic communication.

Academics and professionals from around the world are invited to join the 28th congress in Leipzig, Germany, in September 2027.

The European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) is an autonomous organisation with more than 500 members across over 40 countries, united by a shared vision of advancing academic research and knowledge in public relations and strategic communication.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Prof. Dr. Ansgar Zerfass
Prof. Dr. Christian P. Hoffmann
Prof. Dr. Cornelia Wolf
Prof. Dr. Alexander Godulla
Jeanne Link, M.A.
Caroline Siegel, M.A.
Laura Siewert, M.Sc.
Cornelia Böhland

Visit the congress website at
www.leipzig2027.com

THE ORGANISER

Founded in 1409, Leipzig University is one of the oldest universities in Europe and among Germany's leading research universities. With more than 30,000 students and a strong international orientation, the university combines academic excellence with a rich intellectual and cultural heritage.

Leipzig has long been regarded as a hub for publishing, international trade and cultural innovation. The city is located 150 kilometers southwest of Berlin. It is widely known for its vibrant creative economy, dynamic startup scene and historic role as the starting point of the Peaceful Revolution in East Germany – the Monday demonstrations in Leipzig in 1989 – which ultimately helped pave the way for German reunification.

The Institute of Communication and Media Studies traces its origins back to 1916 and is regarded as one of the birthplaces of communication science in Europe.

Since the 1990s, the institute has also become internationally recognised for its research and teaching in communication management. The small team working in this field has published more than 100 books, as well as numerous articles and studies, leads collaborative research projects across many countries and is strongly engaged in knowledge transfer between academia and professional practice.

The master's programme in communication management is consistently ranked number one among university programmes in the German-speaking countries. Graduates of the institute have received more than 30 awards for their outstanding master's or doctoral theses at national, European and global levels. Many have gone on to pursue careers as professors, communication directors, consultants and media professionals across Europe and beyond.

THE CONGRESS THEME

Innovation has become one of the defining forces shaping societies, organisations, media systems and professional communication. Technological breakthroughs, geopolitical transformations, changing stakeholder expectations and new forms of participation are reshaping the environments in which public relations and strategic communication operate.

Artificial intelligence, synthetic media, automation, data analytics and platform-based communication ecosystems are transforming the way organisations monitor public opinion, produce content, communicate with stakeholders and evaluate the impact of communication. This leads to new societal expectations regarding transparency, responsibility and trustworthiness.

Innovation, however, is not limited to technology. Organisations are also experimenting with new forms of governance, leadership, collaboration and professional development. Communication professionals increasingly operate in complex environments that require new competencies, new mandates for communication departments and new business models for agencies. These developments require both theoretical reflection and practical innovation.

The EUPRERA 2027 Annual Congress invites scholars to explore how innovation is reshaping public relations and strategic communication research, education and professional practice. The congress aims to provide a forum for discussing both opportunities and tensions connected to innovation: Which innovations contribute to more effective and socially responsible communication?

Which innovations challenge existing theories, methods, professional roles and organisational structures? How can communication scholarship contribute to understanding and shaping these developments?

The organisers welcome theoretical, empirical, methodological and applied contributions related to the congress theme and beyond.

Authors are invited to submit short-length papers, full-length papers and panel proposals to one of the thematic tracks below.

TRACK ONE

Emerging Societal and Professional Challenges for Communication Management

This track focuses on macro- and micro-level developments shaping the future of public relations and strategic communication. Contributions may address transformations in media systems, public discourse, stakeholder expectations and opinion formation, as well as the changing role and identity of communication professionals, for example:

- Transformations in the digital public sphere
- Trust, legitimacy and social fragmentation
- Public discourse and societal polarisation
- Strategic communication, democracy and geopoltical conflicts
- Critical perspectives on public relations and strategic communication
- Professional identities, roles and responsibilities
- International and comparative perspectives on communication management

TRACK TWO

Organising and Managing Communication Functions for the Future

This track explores innovations in the governance, management and evaluation of communication functions in organisations and of agencies. Contributions may examine how communication departments adapt to changing organisational environments, stakeholder expectations and technological developments, for example:

- Transformation and repositioning of communication functions
- Leadership and governance in communication management
- Strategic alignment and organisational integration
- Monitoring, measurement and evaluation
- Data-driven communication management
- Content production and platform management
- Competency development and professionalisation
- Innovative approaches to internal communication and employee engagement
- New models of stakeholder participation and co-creation
- Emerging forms of influencer, creator and community communication
- Innovations in financial communication and investor relations
- Entrepreneurial, startup and innovation communication
- Experimental approaches to crisis communication and organisational resilience
- ESG, sustainability and purpose-driven communication innovations
- Innovations in CEO communication and executive visibility
- Corporate branding and reputation management in digital environments
- AI-supported stakeholder engagement and personalised communication
- Participatory, networked and community-centred communication
- Innovations in communication formats, storytelling and content creation

TRACK THREE

Innovating Strategic Communication Practice and Stakeholder Engagement

This track explores how innovation is transforming communication practices, stakeholder relationships and professional roles across different subfields of strategic communication. The focus lies on emerging practices, experimental approaches and new forms of engagement that challenge established approaches, for example:

TRACK FOUR

Technological Developments, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation

This track welcomes research on technological developments and their implications for public relations and strategic communication, for example:

- Artificial intelligence and Generative AI in communication management
- Synthetic media and automation
- Data analytics and predictive communication

- Human–machine interaction in communication
- Ethical implications of AI and automation
- Platformisation and algorithmic communication
- Digital public spheres and online communities
- Virtual, immersive and hybrid communication environments
- Communication technologies and organisational transformation
- Technology acceptance and adoption in communication practice

TRACK FIVE

Novel Approaches in Public Relations Education, Competencies Development and Knowledge Transfer

The Education Track welcomes contributions on challenges and innovative approaches in public relations and strategic communication education, professional development and knowledge transfer between academia and practice. The track is closely connected to the activities of the EUPRERA Education Network and Education Café. Topics may include:

- Innovative approaches, AI and technologies in communication education
- Managerial learning and professional training in strategic communication
- Curriculum development and competency frameworks
- Student wellbeing and inclusive learning environments
- Knowledge transfer between academia and practice
- Practice-based learning and industry collaboration
- Innovative approaches to ethics and responsibility in PR education
- Internationalisation and intercultural education
- Future skills for communication professionals

TRACK SIX

Open Track: Current Research in Communication Management and PR

The Open Track welcomes insightful theoretical, empirical and applied research that contributes to advancing public relations and strategic communication scholarship beyond the specific congress theme.

Submissions using innovative methodologies, interdisciplinary perspectives and comparative approaches are particularly encouraged. This track also welcomes contributions addressing methodological innovation in communication management and public relations research.



St. Thomas Church



Bach Monument



Monument to the
Battle of the Nations



Bars and cafés
on the vibrant Karl-Liebknecht-Straße



Mädler Arcade Gallery with Auerbach's Cellar

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The EUPRERA Annual Congress accepts conceptual, theoretical, empirical and applied research as well as different methodological approaches advancing public relations and strategic communication scholarship and practice.

TYPES OF SUBMISSIONS

1. Short-length papers
2. Full-length research papers
3. Panel proposals (two varieties)

Short-length and full-length research papers are competitive and will be selected through a double-blind review process.

Submitters of both short-length and full-length research papers are eligible for the Paper Development Workshop (PDW) if they opt for it. Full-length research papers receive higher consideration, as the PDW is intended to support publication-oriented work.

Panel proposals will be reviewed by a separate committee without blinding based on the following criteria:

- Fit with the congress theme
- Contribution to the body of knowledge in public relations and strategic communication
- Clarity and coherence of the panel concept
- Originality and innovativeness
- Institutional and national diversity among panelists

Abstract-only submissions will not be reviewed.

All submissions must be prepared in MS Word or PDF format, using 12-point font size, double spacing, and 25 mm margins on A4 pages. All submissions must be made using the congress template and cover page, which will be available on the ConfTool platform.

SHORT-LENGTH PAPERS

Short-length papers are intended for work in progress and should clearly present:

- Research purpose and questions
- Theoretical framework
- Research design and methods
- Preliminary and/or expected findings
- Expected contribution to scholarship and practice

Short-length papers should be between 2,500 and 3,000 words, including references, tables, figures and appendices.

A short-length paper should contain:

- A concise title
- Structured abstract (max. 250 words)
- Up to six keywords
- Introduction
- Central elements of the literature review/ theoretical approach
- Central elements of design/methodology/ approach
- Preliminary and/or expected findings/ results
- Preliminary reflections and expected contribution
- List of references

All identifying author information must be removed for review.

FULL-LENGTH RESEARCH PAPERS

Full-length papers are considered completed research ready for publication.

Submitted full-length papers must not have been previously presented, published, accepted for publication or scheduled for presentation elsewhere.

Full-length papers should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words, including references, tables, figures and appendices.

A full-length paper should contain:

- A concise title
- Structured abstract (max. 250 words)
- Up to six keywords
- Introduction
- Literature review/theoretical approach
- Design/methodology/approach
- Findings/results
- Discussion and conclusions
- Complete reference list

For formatting requirements, authors should follow the guidelines of the Journal of Communication Management.

All identifying author information must be removed for review.

RESEARCH PANELS

Panel proposals should focus on current issues and debates in public relations and strategic communication related to the congress theme.

A research panel should consist of:

- One chairperson
- Four to five presentations (maximum)
- One respondent

No participant may hold more than one role.

Research panel proposals should contain:

- A concise title
- Up to six keywords
- An 800-word rationale
- Clear presentation of key questions and contributions
- Method of delivery and audience interaction
- Names, affiliations and biographies of panelists
- Panelists' presentation titles and abstracts (max. 200 words).
- Statement confirming the participation of all panelists at the congress.

Proposals that do not follow the guidelines will be disqualified.

IMPORTANT DATES

Submissions

- Submission deadline: 30 March 2027
- Feedback to authors: 30 May 2027
- Full programme release: 30 June 2027

Registration

- Early bird until: 1 August 2027
- Last chance: 1 September 2027

NEW CATEGORY

ACADEMIA-PRACTICE COLLABORATION PANEL

Academia-Practice Collaboration Panels focus on research conducted collaboratively by academics and practitioners in response to specific organisational, sectoral, professional, or industry needs. They provide a structured space to discuss research that addresses concrete challenges in public relations and strategic communication practice while contributing to academic knowledge, methodological reflection, or research-informed professional practice. Proposals should explain the context and need from which the research emerged, the nature of the academic-practitioner collaboration, and its relevance to the discipline and profession. Research that informs organisational decision-making, supports sectoral development, or generates new questions for academic inquiry is particularly welcome.

Panels should be organised around a clearly defined substantive research problem, question, or professional challenge, rather than academia-practice collaboration as a general theme. Individual presentations may address different organisational, sectoral, national, or methodological contexts, but should collectively contribute to a coherent discussion of the panel's central issue.

An Academia-Practice Collaboration Panel should consist of one chairperson, 3–5 presentations, and one mandatory respondent. Nobody should take two roles. The panel should include both academics and practitioners. Panelists should ideally represent different organisations, sectors, countries, or professional contexts.

Proposals for Academia-Practice Collaboration Panels should contain:

- A concise title.
- Up to six keywords.
- An 800-word rationale including a clear statement of the organisational, sectoral, professional, or industry need from which the research emerged, and its relevance to public relations or related disciplines and the profession.
- A clear presentation of the panel's central research question, problem, or professional challenge, and an explanation of how the individual presentations collectively contribute to addressing it.
- A clear explanation of the academic-practitioner collaboration, including the role of the participating professionals or organisations in the research process.
- Method of delivery, e.g., the modality of panel discussion and eventual audience interaction.
- Names, affiliations, biographies, and roles of all panelists.
- Panelists' presentation titles and abstracts (max. 200 words).
- Statement confirming the participation of all panelists at the congress.

Proposals that do not follow the guidelines will be disqualified.

BEST PAPER AWARDS AND PUBLICATIONS

Original and unpublished full-length research papers are eligible for EUPRERA Best Paper Awards.

The Scientific Committee may also consider outstanding short-length papers with strong publication potential.

Authors of selected contributions will be invited to submit a final version of their work to:

- A special issue of the Journal of Communication Management (subject to the journal's double-blind peer-review process)
- An edited book volume in the Advances in Public Relations and Communication Management series published by Emerald (subject to a peer-review process coordinated by the editors)

Additional awards include:

- EUPRERA Best Reviewer Award
- EUPRERA Master Thesis Award for Excellence
- EUPRERA PhD Award for Excellent Doctoral Thesis

Please note that publication opportunities are linked to full-length research papers. Short-length papers may, in exceptional cases, be considered for inclusion in the congress book.

Authors will be notified in June 2027 whether their contribution is being considered for the special issue or for the book, with the understanding that the invitation does not guarantee publication.

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

12–15 SEPTEMBER 2027 (MON–WED)

The EUPRERA PhD Seminar will be held before the congress formally begins. The seminar provides an international setting where doctoral students can present their ongoing work, receive feedback from senior scholars and peers and establish valuable international networks. More information on the seminar and the application process will be available on the EUPRERA website.

15 SEPTEMBER 2027 (WED)

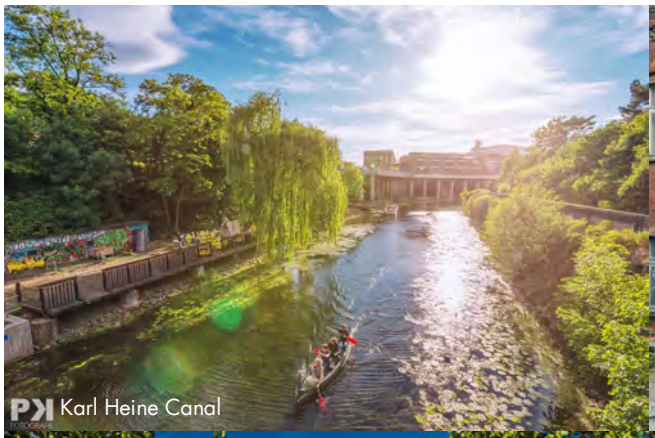
- Morning: Pre-conference workshops and meetings, including the Paper Development Workshop (PDW), Education Café, EUPRERA Network meetings and free city walk (I)
- 14:00: Congress opening, academic keynote session, panel with Chief Communication Officers on the role of innovation for strategic communication
- 17:00: Welcome reception, including networking and live music

16–17 SEPTEMBER 2027 (THU/FRI)

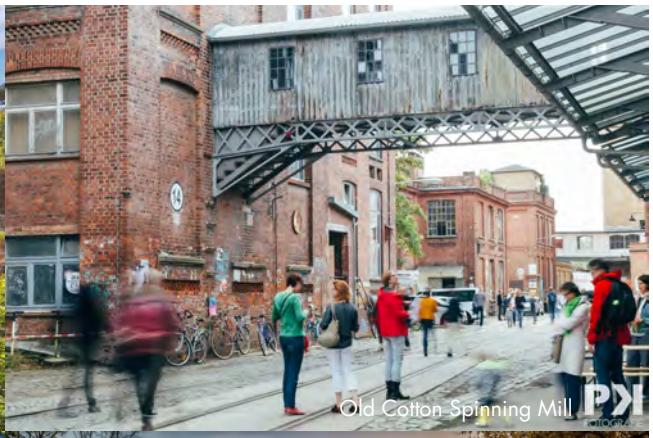
- Parallel paper sessions and panels
- Special panel on innovation, further education and managerial learning
- Gala dinner on Thursday evening
- EUPRERA General Assembly

18 SEPTEMBER 2027 (SAT)

- Free city walk (II)
- Social activities



Karl Heine Canal



Old Cotton Spinning Mill



Leipzig University
(Main Campus)



Johannapark and the New Town Hall



Augustusplatz and Opera House

SEVEN REASONS TO COME TO LEIPZIG IN 2027

Mark 15–18 September 2027 in your calendar and set aside a few extra days to make this congress one of your most memorable trips next year. Here are seven things you won't want to miss:

(1) THE COOLEST CITY IN GERMANY (LONELY PLANET)

"Just over an hour south of Berlin, something special is happening," writes Lonely Planet (2025): "Shut behind the Iron Curtain of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) until 1989, (…) Leipzig has healed those scars and transformed itself into a vibrant cultural hub. With its bar-strewn neighborhoods, quirky galleries, architectural splendor, independent boutiques and crumbling foundries repurposed as creative centers, no wonder they're giving this place gaudy nicknames like 'HypeZig' and, fittingly, 'New Berlin'.

Leipzig, the most populous city in the German state of Saxony with 633,000 residents, has been an open-minded and international trade city since the time of the Holy Roman Empire. Via Regia and the Via Imperii, two important medieval trade routes, intersected here, marking the city's economic importance. The Leipzig Trade Fair dates back to 1190. The university was founded in 1409 by scholars and students moving out of Prague. The world's first daily newspaper "Einkommende Zeitungen", was published here in 1650 and the city was a centre of publishing in Europe until 1945. The tremendous changes following German reunification have made Leipzig one of the most popular places to live for people of all ages, thanks to its strong academic and business environment, its rich cultural and recreational offerings and its central location.

(2) THE WALKABLE CONFERENCE

Leipzig is a unique venue for the 2027 EUPRERA Annual Congress, with all event locations situated in the historic city centre and no journey taking more than five to ten minutes on foot. This includes the main railway station, a wide selection of hotels, the opening events at the Kupfersaal, the main conference days at the university, the gala dinner at Auerbachs Keller, and a wide variety of bars, restaurants, museums, shops and other attractions.

(3) THE EXCHANGE WITH PRACTITIONERS

Thanks to the organisers' close ties with Germany's professional communication community, their alumni network and the support of the Günter Thiele Foundation, experienced communication professionals from across Germany can attend the conference from Wednesday afternoon to Thursday morning, including the welcome reception. Panel and paper sessions with strong implications for practice will be scheduled during this time. Researchers will have the opportunity to exchange ideas with professionals and receive feedback on their research.

(4) THE GALA DINNER AT AUERBACHS KELLER

Probably one of the best-known historical restaurants in the world and linked to world literature and academia like no other: in 1525, the renowned physician and philosopher Dr. Heinrich Stromer von Auerbach began serving wine to students in the wine cellar of his house on Grimmaische Gasse in Leipzig. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe spent days and nights here during his time as a student in Leipzig. This inspired him to include a famous scene in "Faust – Dr. Faustus riding on a barrel in Auerbach's Cellar". The gala dinner will take place in the wine cellar of the 500-year-old restaurant, normally closed to the public. Alongside a buffet, Dr. Faustus will appear in a live performance to entertain the congress participants.

(5) THE VALUE FOR MONEY

Attending conferences can be expensive due to rising hotel rates. One of Leipzig's advantages is its wide selection of modern hotels in the city centre, offering accommodation across all price categories at reasonable rates. Recommendations and special offers will be announced on the congress website in early 2027. Thanks to these savings, participants can plan additional nights to meet colleagues and enjoy the city, or combine their trip to Leipzig with an overnight stay in Berlin if they are flying there.

(6) THE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

Sleep peacefully at night? That might be a good idea for an academic conference. But some participants might prefer to use the opportunity to catch up with international colleagues they haven't seen in a while. Leipzig offers many great bars and restaurants, whether in the popular Drallewatsch – officially known as Barfußgässchen – or on Gottschedstraße. Another well-known option is the Moritzbastei, located in a medieval bastion and one of Germany's largest student clubs. Former Chancellor Angela Merkel was among the students who helped restore the club during her time at the Leipzig University .

(7) THE LEISURE PART: HISTORY, ART, MUSIC, WATER, NATURE

Leipzig is full of history. The organisers will offer two free city tours for those who want to explore the highlights in a nutshell. Other sights not to be missed include: St. Thomas Church, where the famous composer Johann Sebastian Bach served as cantor (with free short concerts by the world-famous St. Thomas Choir every Saturday); the Runde Ecke Museum, which showcases the activities of the East German secret service at the former Stasi headquarter; the Old Town Hall; the Monument to the Battle of the Nations; the Cotton Mill Areal with its galleries and the Kunstkraftwerk Leipzig, Germany's leading museum for digital and multimedia art featuring immersive exhibitions – a hotspot for creatives and art lovers.

Leipzig is also a city of water – many visitors love guided boat tours or canoe trips through the canals of the trendy Plagwitz district, also known as "Little Venice" (without millions of cruiseship tourists). Are you an Animal lover or travelling with children? Leipzig Zoo is home to around 850 species, making it one of the most species-rich zoos in Europe. Its immersive habitats include Gondwanaland, a vast indoor tropical rainforest, and Pongoland, a unique facility for great apes. Staying for the weekend before or after the conference? Be sure to check in advance of the schedules of the famous Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Opera House or RB Leipzig, one of Germany's top three football clubs and Champions League participant, which plays its home matches at the impressive Red Bull Arena. More info: www.leipzig.travel/en/

TRAVEL

- Leipzig Central Station is a hub in the European high-speed rail network. Congress participants from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Netherlands and France might want to consider travelling by train.
- Leipzig-Halle Airport (LEJ) is served daily by several connecting flights from Frankfurt and Vienna via the Star Alliance network (Lufthansa, Swiss, United, etc.) and is connected to the city centre by the S-Bahn surburban railway in 15 minutes.
- Berlin Airport (BER) offers numerous low-cost and direct flights from all over Europe, New York and Toronto. There are hourly train connections to Leipzig Central Station (approx. 90 minutes) as well as affordable bus connections.



Leipzig Main Station

CONGRESS SPONSOR

The Günter Thiele Foundation for Communication and Management promotes research, education and knowledge transfer in the field of communication management. This mission is realised through a variety of projects and initiatives. The foundation supports students and doctoral candidates at Leipzig University through the Günter Thiele Award for graduate students, a Research Fellowship for PhD Students, and a Fellowship Program for international guest professors.

The foundation also supports national initiatives such as the Academic Society for Management & Communication, a leading nonprofit think tank that brings together the expertise of several research universities and the Chief Communication Officers of more than 50 international companies in German-speaking countries. Further initiatives include the Center for Research in Financial Communication, which specialises in investor relations, and the Center for History & Corporate Communication. The Executive Board is chaired by Prof. Dr. Christof Ehrhart, Chief Communication Officer of Bosch and Prof. Dr. Günter Bentele, Emeritus at Leipzig University.

Its founder and mentor, Dr. h.c. Günter F. Thiele (1934–2024), is considered one of the formative figures in the development of communication consulting in Germany. A former journalist born in East Germany near Leipzig, Thiele began his career in advertising and later moved into the public relations industry after emigrating to West Germany. In the early 1970s, he became owner and managing director of ABC Presse-Information, which at the time was the largest communication agency in Germany. An entire generation of agency leaders in Germany worked with and learned from him. He was personally committed to supporting students and advancing research, and ultimately bequeathed his estate to the foundation.



Dr. h.c. Günter F. Thiele

More Information:
www.guenter-thiele-stiftung.de

GUENTER THIELE FOUNDATION
FOR COMMUNICATION & MANAGEMENT
Within the Stifterverband


Leipzig Skyline


Old Stock Exchange


Mendelssohn Monument



Barfußgässchen Pub Crawl

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