

Ufficio Stampa della Provincia autonoma di Trento
Piazza Dante 15, 38122 Trento
Tel. 0461 494614 - Fax 0461 494615
uff.stampa@provincia.tn.it

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As the 20th edition begins under the title “Fatal Risks and Choices. Europe at the Crossroads”, voices from academia, media, and institutions gather to tackle complexity, conflict, and the future of the world we live in

Trento Festival of Economics Opens with a Call for Critical Thinking in Uncertain Times

The 20th edition of the Trento Festival of Economics officially opened with a ceremony held at Teatro Sociale, gathering prominent voices from the worlds of journalism, academia, local government, and business. The event was introduced and moderated by Marta Cagnola and Rosalba Reggio of Il Sole 24 Ore. Welcoming speeches were delivered by Fabio Tamburini, Director of Il Sole 24 Ore, Radio 24 and Radiocor, and Chairman of the Festival’s Scientific Committee; Maurizio Fugatti, President of the Autonomous Province of Trento; Maria Carmela Colaiacovo, Chairwoman of Gruppo 24 ORE; Flavio Deflorian, Rector of the University of Trento; Federico Silvestri, CEO of Gruppo 24 ORE; Franco Ianeselli, Mayor of Trento; and Maurizio Rossini, CEO of Trentino Marketing. The opening also featured reflections from Lina Palmerini of Il Sole 24 Ore interviewing Gianfranco Ravasi, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

The 20th edition of the Trento Festival of Economics opened under the headline “Fatal risks and choices. Europe at the crossroads”. From discussions on disability and monetary policy to debates on free markets, tariffs, Gaza, and tourism, this year’s program reflects the relevant topics of our times and the need for informed leadership. One of the most significant additions to this year’s edition is the creation of three spaces dedicated to youngsters: “Voices of Tomorrow”, offering young people a platform to speak and be heard.

Tamburini, Director Il Sole 24 Ore, emphasized that the choice of the theme was made collectively in autumn 2024, and events of recent months have only deepened its relevance. “We are witnessing more than we could ever have imagined. Events like this Festival are extraordinary opportunities to pause and think”, he stated. President Fugatti highlighted the pride of hosting an event that keeps its scientific rigor while remaining rooted in the local community. Colaiacovo, Chairwoman of Gruppo 24 ORE, spoke of the powerful synergy between the Province of Trento and Gruppo 24 ORE. Rector Deflorian reflected on the University’s role in shaping future citizens. “We aim to equip students with the critical thinking and adaptability tools they will need in an increasingly complex world. Science is based on cooperation; when there’s cooperation, there is no space for violence, and that’s what makes this Festival so important today”. CEO of Gruppo 24 ORE Silvestri reminded the audience of the responsibility behind the Festival. With nearly 350 events in just four days, and the international spin-off “Road to Trento” reaching cities such as New Delhi, Johannesburg, and San Francisco, the initiative is gaining global resonance. “Our mission is to offer participants the tools to understand a world which is changing at a fast pace”. Mayor Ianeselli reminded everyone that festivals like this are not only for leaders, but for students and citizens alike. “We should not be people of our times, we should look beyond. This Festival is an opportunity not to be crushed by the present, but to rise above it and move forward”, he stated. CEO of Trentino Marketing, Maurizio

Rossini, acknowledged the nearly 500 people involved in organizing the event. He stated: "Borderlands are historically places of exchange and innovation, and this Festival is proof of this spirit and a way to share it with the world".

Followingly, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi was interviewed by Lina Palmerini of Il Sole 24 Ore. Reflections headed in the direction of the modern crisis of meaning. "We live in a time of information bulimia and existential anorexia. We know everything about trivial topics, but nothing about the ultimate meaning of life", he said. Quoting (among others) Kierkegaard and Brecht, Ravasi warned of a society focused on survival yet detached from deeper purpose. He acknowledged the brilliance of science but urged caution, lamenting the loss of human connection we are experiencing today. The cultural shift currently experienced in the direction of dystopia and small ambitions led him to the following closure: "It's time to rediscover the ability to ask questions, to feel unsettled. That's where truth begins".

As discussions on AI, transhumanism, identity, and conflict unfold, this Festival stands out more than ever as a space for dialogue, complexity, and critical thinking.

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