

Presseinformation

The Charlemagne Prize 2025 goes to the President of the European Commission, Dr Ursula von der Leyen

Info 43/25

- With this award, the Charlemagne Prize Board of Directors is honouring 'an outstanding leader of the United Europe, who is leading the Union through a time of profound transformation with vision, courage, determination and foresight.'
- In its citation, the Charlemagne Prize Board of Directors states that 'with this award, the Charlemagne Prize Board wishes to encourage and strengthen Ursula von der Leyen to represent the EU as a significant force in the global political world'.
- The Charlemagne Prize will be awarded on Ascension Day, 29 May 2025, in the Coronation Hall of Aachen City Hall.

Dr Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, will receive the Charlemagne Prize of Aachen in 2025. This was announced by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, Dr Jürgen Linden, and the Mayor of Aachen, Sibylle Keupen, today (15 January 2025) in Aachen.

'The decision in favour of Ursula von der Leyen was unanimous in the Board of Directors,' opened Dr Jürgen Linden. 'For us, the President of the European Commission is the face of Europe in the world. She is the communication hub for all political challenges and problems that arise in Europe – and for Europe – vis-à-vis the world,' emphasised Dr Linden.

Encouragement

In its citation, the Charlemagne Prize Board of Directors added that it wanted to encourage and strengthen Ursula von der Leyen with the award 'to represent the

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EU as a significant force in the global political world, to lead it as a peacemaking, democratising and partnership-based power, to strengthen Europe as a society of values and, through improved competitiveness, to ensure that the great peace project of Europe can also keep its promise of economic and social well-being for its citizens'.

Curriculum vitae

Ursula von der Leyen was born in Brussels in 1958, where her father, the future Prime Minister of Lower Saxony Ernst Albrecht, was working at the time as Head of Cabinet for the German EEC Commissioner Hans von der Groeben. After leaving school, she initially studied archaeology and economics before deciding in favour of medicine in 1980.

A member of the CDU since 1990, she switched to politics as a 'lateral entrant', gaining a seat in the Lower Saxony state parliament in 2003 and being appointed by Minister President Christian Wulff as Minister for Social Affairs, Women, Family and Health in his first cabinet. In 2005, she moved into federal politics as Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth; in 2009, she took over the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In 2013, she became the first woman to be appointed Minister of Defence and was confirmed in this office four years later. On 2 July 2019, Ursula von der Leyen is nominated for the office of President of the Commission.

By awarding the Charlemagne Prize 2025 to the President of the Commission, the Executive Board emphasises 'that Ursula von der Leyen and the Commission she leads have played a decisive role in ensuring that the EU has faced crises of epochal proportions in a united and successful manner'. Ursula von der Leyen was aware that transatlantic cohesion was necessary for Europe's economic security. Following changes to the political structures in the United States, this would now require a special strategic effort on the part of the Europeans. The most important prerequisite for this is the unity of the members. She is fighting for this unity like no other.

Leader of the United Europe

The final citation reads: 'With the President of the European Commission, Dr Ursula von der Leyen, the Board of Directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen 2025 honours an outstanding leader of the United Europe in the year of its 75th anniversary, who leads the

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Union through a time of profound transformations with vision, courage and strength of action, with determination and foresight.'

A celebration of Europe

The Charlemagne Prize will once again be awarded this year on Ascension Day, 29 May. Jürgen Linden reported that Ursula von der Leyen was delighted to receive the award and had already firmly scheduled the Charlemagne Prize ceremony into her diary. He promised: 'We will turn the award ceremony into a strong Charlemagne Prize that will allow the impetus we want to provide to be recognised externally.' Mayor Keupen announced that, in addition to the official ceremony in the Coronation Hall of Aachen City Hall, the award day would be celebrated as a European festival with Aachen citizens and guests: 'open, lively and diverse'.

About the Charlemagne Prize

The International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen is considered one of the most important European prizes. It has been awarded since 1950 to individuals and institutions that have rendered outstanding services to the unification of Europe. Previous recipients include Konrad Adenauer (1954), King Juan Carlos I of Spain (1982), Francois Mitterand and Helmut Kohl (1988), Václav Havel (1991), US President Bill Clinton (2000), Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker (2006), German Chancellor Angela Merkel (2008), Pope Francis (2016), French President Emmanuel Macron (2018) and UN Secretary-General António Guterres (2019).

In 2022, the Belarusian civil rights activists Maria Kalesnikava, Svetlana Tikhonovskaya and Veronica Tsepkalo were honoured with the prize, in 2023 the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people and in 2024 Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt and the Jewish communities in Europe. In March 2004, Pope John Paul II received an extraordinary Charlemagne Prize, which was awarded in Rome.

Certificate and medal

In addition to a certificate, a medal is also awarded, which shows the oldest Aachen city seal from the 12th century with Charlemagne enthroned on the front and an inscription for the respective prize winner on the back.

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Explanatory statement

Please find attached to this press release the official statement of the Charlemagne Prize Board of Directors on the designated laureate Ursula von der Leyen.

More information: www.aachen.de/karlspreis and www.karlspreis.de

Note for the editors

Image 1:

You can use the attached photo of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen free of charge in your reporting until 14 July 2025. After that date, dpa picture alliance will charge a fee.

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Picture 2:

You can also use this photo free of charge as part of your reporting.

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CAPTION:

(from right to left) The Mayor of Aachen, Sibylle Keupen, and Dr Jürgen Linden, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, announced that the President of the European Commission, Dr Ursula von der Leyen, will be awarded the Charlemagne Prize of Aachen in 2025.

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