

**sef:** Stiftung  
Entwicklung  
und Frieden  
Development  
and Peace  
Foundation



# : Addressing social polarisation actively: With dialogue and a firm stand?

## **FORUM Frauenkirche Online**

10 February 2022, 19.00-20.15 hrs (CET)

### **Conference languages**

German/English (simultaneous translation)

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## THE TOPIC

The phenomenon of polarisation in societies is as old as humankind. The underlying causes are manifold and complex. When societies are drawn into the maelstrom of ever-increasing polarisation without strong forces to oppose this trend, there is a risk of division and even violent confrontation.

But there is also a wealth of experience worldwide which can be used to contribute to reducing the drifting apart of societies, to building bridges of dialogue, allowing trust to grow and ultimately reconciling societies. In post-war societies in particular, civil society groups, but also governmental and intergovernmental actors are working systematically on these processes.

For some years now, however, the tone of the debate has become harsher, even in established democracies, and many positions are seemingly irreconcilable. The COVID pandemic has further fuelled this growing polarisation in Germany and many other countries to a degree that, at least in some places, threatens peace within society.

Where can politics and society, culture and religious communities start in order to counteract (further) social division and polarisation in the sense of prevention? How can rifts be overcome and trust rebuilt? And what can be done when dialogue is (apparently) no longer possible?

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## PROGRAMME

19.00 HRS      MUSICAL PRELUDE WITH A VIRTUAL TOUR OF THE FRAUENKIRCHE

**Samuel Kummer**

*Organist of the Frauenkirche Dresden*

WELCOME

**Dr Michèle Roth**

Executive Director

Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

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19.05 HRS      ROUNDTABLE

**Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger**

Former Federal Minister

Deputy Chairwoman, Friedrich Naumann Foundation For Freedom

**Lena Slachmijlder**

Senior Vice President of Programs

Search for Common Ground, Brussels/Washington D.C

CHAired BY

**Bastian Wierzioch**

Reporter, author and moderator, Leipzig

19.55 HRS      INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE AUDIENCE

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20.15 HRS      MUSICAL FAREWELL

**Samuel Kummer**

*Organist of the Frauenkirche Dresden*

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## SPEAKERS' BIOS



### **Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger**

Former Federal Minister, Deputy Chairwoman, Friedrich Naumann Foundation For Freedom

Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger is a lawyer, twice held the office of Federal Minister of Justice (1992-1996 and 2009-2013) and was a member of the German Bundestag for 23 years from 1990 to 2013.

She is Deputy Chairwoman of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and Vice Chair of the Theodor Heuss Foundation. In 2019, she was elected honorary constitutional judge in Bavaria. Since the beginning of 2019, she has held the office of honorary Anti-Semitism Commissioner of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. Her political focus to date has been the defence of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger is the author of several books, most recently (together with Gunna Wendt): “Our Endangered Democracy. How we deal with hate and agitation against politicians and journalists” (2022, German only). She received the Cross of Merit 1 class of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Order of Merit of the Free State of Bavaria, as well as several data protection awards.



### **Lena Slachmuisjlder**

Senior Vice President of Programs, Search for Common Ground, Brussels/Washington D.C

Lena Slachmuisjlder is the Senior Vice President for Programs at Search for Common Ground, the world’s largest peacebuilding organization. For the last 30 years she has worked for peaceful social change, starting as a journalist with anti-apartheid media in South Africa, and pioneering media for peacebuilding during her 20 years at Search for Common Ground. This included directing a Hutu-Tutsi radio production studio in Burundi, adapting participatory theatre approaches to address conflict, producing Congo’s first reality TV show, and training journalists and scriptwriters across multiple countries. She led the design of the Common Ground Approach core curriculum, and published [‘Transforming Violent Extremism: a Peacebuilder’s guide’](#).

Lena is a graduate of Stanford University, an alumni of Amsterdam’s THINK School for Creative Leadership and Brandeis University’s fellowship on Arts and Reconciliation. In 2020, Lena gave a TEDx talk entitled [‘The Vaccine to End War’](#). She lives in the Washington DC area with her husband and three step-children.