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PRESS RELEASE

AI Circular Economy Conference 2026 Unveils New Advisory Board

Leading experts from industry and academia unite to shape a circular future for renewable carbon through the innovative application of artificial intelligence

Hürth, 17 September 2025: nova-Institute is proud to announce the establishment of the new Advisory Board for the upcoming AI Circular Economy Conference 2026, which will take place on 4–5 March 2026 in Cologne and online. The board brings together leading experts from the fields of artificial intelligence, the chemical and materials industries, biotechnology, software and cutting-edge research to ensure a comprehensive and balanced programme.

Recognising the transformative power of artificial intelligence, nova-Institute is actively shaping this development by holding this conference. The nova-Institute is represented on the advisory board by Co-CEOs Lars Börger and Michael Carus, and Head of Technology & Markets Achim Raschka. "Artificial intelligence is changing our entire economy in many ways. However, when it comes to the bioeconomy, the utilisation of CO_2 and recycling, AI has the potential to be a real game changer, as there is even greater scope for optimisation here than in the fossil-based, linear world," emphasises Michael Carus, CEO of nova-Institute. Lars Börger, CEO of nova-Institute, underlines: "AI is emerging as a powerful catalyst for the Renewable Carbon Economy and Circularity—accelerating the maturity of technologies and enabling entirely new business models. We are curious to learn whether our stakeholders share this view."

The Advisory Board unites leading perspectives from the chemical and materials industries, where AI is accelerating the transition from fossil to renewable carbon and driving innovation in polymers, bioplastics, catalysts, and advanced recycling. It also includes experts from the field of artificial intelligence and digital solutions, representing global software companies and practitioners who apply AI to process optimisation, predictive maintenance, and supply chain forecasting. Furthermore, the board ensures that the latest research findings and scientific insights in data analytics, machine learning, and industrial applications are incorporated into the program. With decades of experience in renewable carbon strategies, the bioeconomy, the circular economy, and sustainability consultancy, the nova-Institute further strengthens the board's experience.

Meet the Experts of the Advisory Board

Dr. Lars Börger, nova-Institut

Lars Börger holds a PhD in Chemistry and an Executive Master in General Management. He worked for BASF (Germany) for almost 20 years, many of them as Head of Global Marketing Biopolymers. For another seven years he worked for Neste (Finland) as Vice President Renewable Polymers & Chemicals, Brand Owner and in the Value Chain Management. He represented Neste in the founding process of the Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI) and was a member of the RCI Board, as well as a board member of European Bioplastics for several years.

Dr. Tina Buchholz, Verband der Chemischen Industrie

Dr. Tina Buchholz is Director Department Energy and Climate Policy, Circular Economy at the German Chemical Industry Association. She is a food chemist and joined the German Chemical Industry Association in 2005. There, she initially worked in the field of biotechnology, focusing on industrial and green biotechnology. In 2009, she moved to the climate department, where she was responsible for topics such as the product carbon footprint and EU emissions trading. From October 2010 to December 2023, she also worked as an energy and climate consultant at PlasticsEurope Deutschland e.V.

Dr. Christine Bunte, PlasticsEurope Deutschland

Christine Bunte is Managing Director of Plastics Europe Deutschland since January 1, 2025. Previously, she led the Corporate Advocacy Team at BASF in Ludwigshafen and represented the company on issues related to circular economy and environmental policy. The polymer chemist has gathered extensive experience in the fields of plastics, circular economy, and public affairs at both national and European levels. In her new role as Managing Director of Plastics Europe Deutschland, she aims to further advance the transformation of the plastics industry towards a climate-neutral circular economy.

Michael Carus, nova-Institut

Michael Carus is a physicist and one of Europe's leading experts, market researchers and policy advisors on the renewable carbon economy – including bio-based, CO_2-based and recycling. In late 1994, together with five other scientists, he founded the private and independent nova-Institute for Ecology and Innovation. From the beginning, Carus has been involved in the company as an owner and one of the two managing directors. Today, the nova-Institute employs nearly 50 scientists from a wide range of disciplines, covering markets, technologies, sustainability, communication and policy. In 2020, Carus founded the Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI), which today has almost 70 members from the chemical and materials industries.

Alex Dickmann, KI Bundesverband

Alex Dickmann is responsible for setting up the AI Village in Hürth and is the first point of contact for members of the German AI Association in North Rhine-Westphalia. His work strengthens the regional AI ecosystem and promotes exchange between companies, research institutions and political actors. Previously, he was responsible for the OpenGPT-X and LEAM projects at the German AI Association.

His academic career took him to Salzburg and Brussels, where he completed a degree in Digital Communication Leadership. He gained his first professional experience in European politics as an assistant to a Member of the European Parliament. He also supported the DAAD branch office in Jakarta, Indonesia, where he contributed to international educational cooperation. With his broad range of experience, he combines technological, political and economic perspectives to specifically advance AI development in Germany.

Dr. Patrick Glöckner, Evonik

Dr. Patrick Glöckner has been driving the transition towards a Circular Economy for many years. Together with customers and partners, he develops innovative solutions across various value chains. Over the past 25 years, the polymer chemist has held several leadership roles at Evonik, always at the intersection of technology, innovation, and business. Today, Patrick leads Evonik's Next Markets Program, which also encompasses the company's circularity initiatives.

Prof. Dr. Dirk Hecker, Fraunhofer IAIS

Prof. Dr. Dirk Hecker is Professor for Data Analytics at the University of Siegen and Deputy Director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Intelligent Analysis and Information Systems IAIS. Furthermore, he is Managing Director of the »Fraunhofer Big Data and Artificial Intelligence Alliance«, a network of over 30 Fraunhofer Institutes working in cross-sector AI and Big Data research and technology development. His current work focuses on Agentic AI and Generative AI. He studied geoinformatics at the Universities of Cologne and Bonn and obtained his doctorate at the University of Cologne.

Dr. Tobias Klement, CLIB

Dr. Tobias Klement works as Deputy Cluster Manager at the Cluster Industrielle Biotechnologie e.V. (CLIB), focusing on transformation processes within companies and regions. At CLIB, he aims to connect stakeholders in the bioeconomy and bring sustainable ideas into practical application. His recent activities include, among others, the creation of scaling infrastructures and the support of young companies and individuals taking their first steps in the bioeconomy. Being a bioprocess engineer by training, he formerly led the Center for Molecular Transformation at RWTH Aachen University.

Dr. Wolfgang Lippert, Microsoft

Dr. Wolfgang Lippert heads up Microsoft Germany's business for customers in the chemical and energy industries. He studied and earned his doctorate in chemistry at LMU Munich and, prior to joining Microsoft, held various management positions at companies including Google, Salesforce and Accenture. He brings with him in-depth industry knowledge in chemistry, the process industry, energy, life sciences and consumer goods. He has collaborated with executives from Europe, America, Asia and the Middle East on international projects. In doing so, he has supported major transformations and developed practical strategies. Together with his teams, he ensures tangible results and sustainable customer loyalty.

Nils Janus, Covestro

Nils Janus is the Chief AI Officer at Covestro, a pioneering material science company with an annual revenue of 14 billion EUR. His role is to ensure an ecosystem where carbon- and silicon-based intelligences can collaborate and jointly thrive. With a diverse leadership background, Nils has led departments in Treasury, Power Plant Construction, and IT across Germany, the UAE, and South Korea. His consistent priority has been to measure the financial contribution of AI in terms of P&L impact. Together with a great team he built the world's first autonomous batch-plant in the chemical industry. Nils holds a master's degree in Pure Mathematics and Computer Science from the FAU Erlangen. His international strategic perspective and pioneering of autonomous AI with quantifiable financial impact position him as a thought leader transforming the chemical industry.

Achim Raschka, nova-Institut

Achim Raschka has been with nova-Institute since 2008 and has headed the "Technology & Markets" department since 2012. He studied Biology at the Free University of Berlin, where he also lectured in ecology and zoology. He then worked at the press office of the German Human Genome Project (DHGP) as an editor in a digital media publishing house. At nova-Institute, his main focus is on the use of biomass, CO_2, recycling, and industrial biotechnology for industry, as well as on the transformation of

the chemical industry from fossil to renewable carbon sources. He has extensive experience in technology assessment, market research, and international project work. Currently, he is also exploring the role of artificial intelligence in technology assessment and innovation scouting. AI-supported analyses help him to identify and evaluate trends at an early stage and to develop sustainable strategies for industry.

The nova-Institute invites researchers, innovators and industry experts to submit their contributions to the Call for Abstracts by 26 October 2025: https://ai-circulareconomy.eu/call-for-abstracts.

Find all nova press releases, images and more free-for-press material at https://nova-institute.eu/news/pr/Responsible for the content under German press law (V. i. S. d. P.):

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nova-Institut GmbH has been working in the field of sustainability since the mid-1990s and focuses today primarily on the topic of renewable carbon cycles (recycling, bioeconomy and CO_2 utilisation/ CCU).

As an independent research institute, **nova** supports in particular customers in chemical, plastics and materials industries with the transformation from fossil to renewable carbon from biomass, direct CO_2 utilisation and recycling.

Both in the accompanying research of international innovation projects and in individual, scientifically based management consulting, a multidisciplinary team of scientists at **nova** deals with the entire range of topics from renewable raw materials, technologies and markets, economics, political framework conditions, life cycle assessments and sustainability to communication, target groups and strategy development.

50 experts from various disciplines are working together on the defossilisation of the industry and for a climate neutral future. More information at: nova-institute.eu – renewable-carbon.eu

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