

PRESS RELEASE

## **gamescom congress 2026: First Program Highlights Showcase the Relevance of Games to Society, Democracy, and the Economy**



**gamescom congress 2026 Announces First Topics and Speakers +++ Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to Open the Congress +++ Talks and Panels featuring the United Nations, the Red Cross, and EUROPOL among the Highlights**

The gamescom congress, the world's leading conference on the potential of games, is announcing today the first program highlights and speakers for this year's event. The congress will take place on August 27, 2026, as part of gamescom, the world's

largest gaming event, and will explore two socially highly relevant topics with the focal themes ‚Playing Field Democracy‘ and ‚The Games Effect‘. The conference will be opened for the first time by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, [as the organizers announced in June](#). Following opening remarks by Felix Falk, Managing Director of game — the Association of the German Games Industry and co-organizer of the gamescom congress, the Federal President will open the congress with a speech and, to kick off the event, will attend a panel discussion with experts from the gaming, cultural, and political sectors on the important role of games in our democracy. In addition to the Federal President’s opening of the gamescom congress, the following initial program highlights offer a preview of this high-profile event:

### **‚Playing Field Democracy‘ Highlights the Potential of Games to Foster Better Social Cohesion**

- Today, numerous organizations around the world are using games in targeted ways to bridge educational gaps, combat loneliness, train humanitarian first responders, and advance climate action. The **‚Power of Play‘** panel brings together leading global institutions on one stage to demonstrate how the power of games can be harnessed to build a better society. The panelists are: Raquel Abifadel from UNICEF Office of Innovation; Melissa Kiehl, Product Manager for External Digital Engagement / Immersive Technology at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); Lisa Pak, Project Lead at Playing for the Planet (United Nations Environment Programme UNEP); Andy Pattison, Team Lead Frontier Technologies at the World Health Organization; and Tatjana Sachse, Lead Spokesperson & Counsel at the Global Video Game Coalition. The panel will be moderated by Jenny Ching-Wei Lee from Video Games Europe (VGE).
- There are over 117 million people worldwide who have been displaced from their home countries as a result of war, including 47 million children. Studies in refugee camps show that gaming is an important part of life there. In the

keynote address **,Can Play Rebuild What Displacement Disrupts?**

**Gaming and Innovation in Forced Displacement,**' Petar Dimitrov, Associate Innovation Officer at UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, explores how games can promote well-being and mental health and contribute to integration.

- What role do video games play in protecting our democracy? A top notch fireside chat titled **'Is there a role for video games in strengthening European democracy?'** with George E. Osborn, editor of the Video Games Industry Memo and author of the recently published book **,Power Play: Video Games, Politics, and the Battle for Global Influence'** and Dominik Swiecicki, Senior Analyst at the Swedish Psychological Defence Agency will address this question.

**,The Games Effect' – how numerous sectors of the economy and areas of life benefit from the use of games and their innovative power**

- Game development is complex, resource-intensive, and global. In his presentation titled **,AI – The Enabler of creativity, not the stifler of it,'** Quyen Quach, Vice President of Software at Razer, Inc., explores how artificial intelligence can help studios better meet these challenges and how their approach to AI can serve as a model for the entire creative industry.
- Protecting children from cybercrime is one of the goals of EUROPOL, the European Union's law enforcement agency. To this end, the agency developed **,Cyber Defenders'**, a game in which children take on the role of a police officer on Roblox. In the presentation **,The Games Effect in Law Enforcement: Building a Roblox Game to Protect Our Youngest Players,'** Carlota Maura-James, Communications Officer at European Agency for Law Enforcement (EUROPOL), explains how the game is making its way directly into classrooms and how such a project must be structured to resonate with its target audience.

- The session **,Why charity partnerships are a win for everyone in games'** demonstrates that charity partnerships offer far more possibilities than just fundraising campaigns. In it, Rich Keith, Chair of Trustees at the gaming charity event Jingle Jam; Siân Mayhall-Purvis, Gaming Partnerships Manager at the NGO War Child UK; and Charlie Sarginson, Digital Communities and Partnerships Manager at the charity CALM, explore the synergies between successful charitable initiatives and the gaming industry.

The full program will be announced in August.

### **Viola Tensil will host the gamescom congress**

Viola Tensil will host the program on the event's main stage. As an experienced host and pioneer in the German gaming media landscape, she will use her expertise to bridge the gap between the presentations.

The gamescom congress is aimed at a broad audience from the fields of culture, education, politics, science, and media, as well as representatives from various economic sectors who are exploring how their respective industries can benefit from the innovative power of the games industry.

### **About gamescom congress**

Gamescom congress is the world's leading conference on the potential of computer games in a digitalized world and offers interfaces far beyond the digital and media industry. International speakers present their topics in lectures, seminars and panel discussions. The gamescom congress takes place annually as part of gamescom in Cologne and is organized by Koelnmesse GmbH and game, the association of the German games industry. The gamescom congress is sponsored by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. <https://congress.gamescom.global/en/>

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