

Opening Speech by

Norbert Beckmann-Dierkes, Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Bulgaria

21st National Innovation Forum, 9 December 2025

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear partners and friends,

It is a great pleasure to open the 21st National Innovation Forum—Bulgaria’s leading platform uniting business, science, public institutions, and the entrepreneurial community. For more than two decades, this forum has shown that innovation is essential for the development of our society and for Europe’s competitiveness.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for our long and fruitful partnership with ARC Fund. Their work has consistently strengthened Bulgaria’s innovation ecosystem and helped create the bold ideas we celebrate today.

This year’s Innovation.bg report once again provides a clear picture of Bulgaria’s innovative potential and the challenges ahead. At a time when the European Commission places innovation at the heart of its priorities for 2024–2029, Bulgaria’s progress is vital not only for its national development but for Europe’s strength in a rapidly changing world.

We already see inspiring examples—Bulgarian companies developing leading software solutions, entrepreneurs creating green technologies, scientists advancing clean energy and biotechnology. Germany, too, demonstrates how innovation, engineering excellence, and long-term investment can transform entire industries. Together, our shared European innovative spirit is a powerful driver of competitiveness.

For the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, innovation is not only an economic topic—it is a democratic one. Our foundation prioritizes strong institutions, resilient societies, and sustainable development. Innovation fuels all three. It empowers citizens, strengthens civic participation, and gives young people reasons to believe in their future here in Europe, in Bulgaria. It helps societies remain open, competitive, and confident.

Bulgaria occupies a uniquely strategic position at the crossroads of Europe and the Black Sea, serving as a central hub for regional connectivity. Its ports, transport corridors, and infrastructure networks link markets, industries, and communities across the region, facilitating the flow of goods, energy, information, and people. The Black Sea itself acts as a bridge, connecting countries and enabling seamless maritime, digital, and logistical connections that are essential for economic growth and social development. When combined with innovation and forward-looking strategies, this multidimensional connectivity—spanning transport, energy, digital networks, and institutional cooperation—has the power to transform the region, enhance prosperity, and improve the wellbeing of citizens. By leveraging these strategic advantages, Bulgaria can strengthen regional integration, support resilient supply chains, and play a leading role in building a connected, innovative, and competitive Europe.

Today we will also honour the finalists of the Innovative Enterprise of the Year competition—proof that Bulgarian companies can be creative, ambitious, and successful internationally.

Let us continue working together—across institutions, business, science, and civil society—to strengthen Europe’s innovation, competitiveness, and democratic resilience.

Thank you, and I wish you a productive and inspiring forum.