



# Press Release

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## ESMT Berlin establishes first institute for Hidden Champions worldwide

- **Interface between practical research, executive education, and discourse**
- **Egon Zehnder first strategic partner**
- **Distinguished advisory board to be led by Alexander Knauf of Knauf Gips KG**
- **Opening ceremony on November 22**

ESMT Berlin announces the founding of the Hidden Champions Institute (HCI), the first of its kind worldwide. The institute, launched to strengthen the backbone of Germany's economy, will officially open on November 22. Germany is the global frontrunner of Hidden Champions, companies that are in the global top three or the market leader on their continent and have a turnover of less than five billion euros. These companies are often not well known, but they are strong innovators. For example, Hidden Champions file five times as many patents per 1,000 employees as larger corporations and invest twice as much in research and development.

The HCI brings together practical research, executive education, and discourse between Hidden Champions, academia, and society. Embedded in an international network, the institute provides leaders of Hidden Champions a protected environment for open discussion. With a strong academic base, the institute encourages the executive management development in German medium-sized, family-operated companies and promotes the development of Hidden Champions. The internationally active personnel consulting firm Egon Zehnder is the first strategic partner of the HCI.

The German economist Dr. Sabine B. Rau is the founding director of the newly established institute. Rau grew up in a family of entrepreneurs and was most recently professor of entrepreneurship and family business as well as director of the Center for Entrepreneurship at King's College in London.

"The Hidden Champions Institute focuses on topics central to the German *Mittelstand*, such as innovation, digitalization, and governance. The institute thereby draws upon strengths of ESMT and supports Hidden Champions to develop organizationally, strategically, and innovatively," said ESMT president Prof. [Jörg Rocholl](#).

An advisory board of renowned experts will support the HCI. The advisory board includes Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Hermann Simon, who coined the term "Hidden Champions." Alexander Knauf, managing director and general partner of Knauf Gips KG, will chair the board. "Thanks to the practice-oriented teaching, the Hidden Champions Institute will offer executives from SMEs excellent continuing education. As the first institute for entrepreneurial market leaders worldwide, it will also provide valuable insights into the innovative power and sustainability of this German economic phenomenon," commented Alexander Knauf.

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### **About ESMT Berlin**

ESMT Berlin was founded by 25 leading global companies and institutions. The international business school offers a full-time MBA, an executive MBA, a master's in management, as well as open enrollment and customized executive education programs. ESMT focuses on three main topics: leadership and social responsibility, European competitiveness, and the management of technology. ESMT faculty publishes in top academic journals. Additionally, the business school provides an interdisciplinary platform for discourse between politics, business, and academia. The business school is based in Berlin, Germany, with Schloss Gracht as an additional location near Cologne. ESMT is a private business school with the right to grant PhDs and is accredited by the German state, AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS, and FIBAA. [www.esmt.org](http://www.esmt.org)