

Dr. Nina Smidt

Managing Director / Board Spokesperson



Dr. Nina Smidt combines strategic vision with hands-on experience from international foundation and project work – from Social Innovation and Climate Education to entrepreneurial solutions for Essential Services.

Role and responsibilities

Dr. Nina Smidt has been the Managing Director (CEO) and the Spokesperson of the Executive Board of Siemens Stiftung since 1 April 2020. Together with her colleague Robert Balthasar (CFO), she leads the foundation and is responsible for its day-to-day management, strategic development, and communications, as well as for steering the competence centres of Education, Social Entrepreneurship, and Culture across its focus regions of Africa, Europe, India, and Latin America. As Managing Director, she and her fellow board member also represent Siemens Stiftung in its role as the sole shareholder of WE!Hub Victoria Ltd., a social enterprise founded by Siemens Stiftung in Kenya.

Siemens Stiftung under her leadership

Under her leadership, the non-profit, international foundation works to advance sustainable social development and opening up opportunities, together with people and communities, to actively shape social and ecological transformation. Its work centres on three areas of action: Essential Services, Digitality, and Climate. The foundation meets the challenges in these fields collaboratively and treats them as opportunities for innovation and positive change. In its hands-on project work, it fosters access and participation, builds 21st-century skills, and enables shared learning. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, Siemens Stiftung thus connects local action with global perspectives to strengthen resilience, social cohesion, and regenerative practices where they are needed most.

Expertise and focus areas

The continued development of this strategic direction draws on Dr. Nina Smidt's broad international expertise in education, sustainability, and international policy. A central focus of her work lies in strengthening international relationships, social innovation, and international partnerships. She also brings particular expertise in social entrepreneurship, geostrategy, and the development of sustainable fundraising strategies. Because she consistently considers sustainable development in its economic, ecological, and social contexts, she is able to design and implement effective management strategies for transformation processes, change management, and New Work initiatives.

As a speaker

As Spokesperson of the Executive Board, and drawing on her wide-ranging experience and expertise, Dr. Nina Smidt regularly represents the foundation on international stages – from the UN Climate Change Conference to foundation and innovation forums. A selection of her appearances includes the American Council on Germany, COP30 (UN Climate Change Conference), the Green Peak Festival, and the German Foundations Day (Deutscher Stiftungstag), among many others. In her keynotes and panel contributions, she pairs strategic vision with concrete experience from project work, making major transformation questions tangible through real-world examples. She speaks in German and English, to specialist and general audiences alike, on topics such as social innovation and scaling impact, climate education as a foundation for sustainable action, the future of foundations and philanthropy, social entrepreneurship and access to basic services, as well as international partnerships.

Professional career

Her expertise is built on more than 20 years of international leadership across educational institutions, academic bodies, think tanks, and foundations. Before joining Siemens Stiftung, she headed the US foundation of the ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius in New York from 2010 to 2020 and, in parallel, served as Head of International Planning and Development at the ZEIT-Stiftung in Hamburg from 2011 to 2020. Prior to that, from 2006 to 2011, she was Managing Director of Bucerius Education GmbH at Bucerius Law School in Hamburg, leading its Executive Education, Conference Management, and Consulting divisions, having previously served as Deputy Managing Director of the International Center for Graduate Studies at the University of Hamburg.

Academic background

Her career is grounded in a solid academic background: Dr. Nina Smidt is a linguist and cultural theorist by training, holding a doctorate in the field. She wrote her dissertation on critical literary theory at the University of Hamburg before receiving postdoctoral fellowships at the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell University in the US and at the University of Haifa in Israel. Her academic path had led her there via studies in German, English, and Education at the University of Hamburg and in Political and Cultural Studies at the University of Technology in Sydney, and on to an EMBA at the European School of Management and Technology in Berlin. She has also taken part in various executive and board development programs at Harvard Business School, the Yale School of Management, Columbia Business School, and WHU / IESE.

Advisory and board mandates

Dr. Nina Smidt is involved in German and international advisory boards:

- Federal Association of German Foundations (Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen), Berlin
- LATIMPACTO (Impact Investing for Latin America), Bogotá
- Chair of the Board of Trustees, Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung (from 1 October 2026)

Siemens Stiftung, August 2026