

Interview with Mark von Seydlitz

NBK Legal | September 2025 Topic:

Leadership, Film & Europe

I. Introduction

Question: *Thank you very much, Mark, for taking the time to talk to me today about the topic of "Europe, where are you?!" To start with, could you tell us a little about yourself and what you do for a living?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

I am a director, producer and media trainer for executives – I have been working in the film and media world for more than 30 years, with over 900 projects ranging from advertising to international co-productions for feature films and TV. Today, I mainly work with executives from politics, business and the media on how to appear visible, effective and credible – both on stage and on camera.

Question: *What is your connection to Europe?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

For me, Europe is a place of experience, especially for exchanges with people and cultures. I have filmed in many countries and worked with teams that brought very different mentalities to the table. For me, Europe is most evident in the way people work together on set – when, for example, Italians, Germans, French, Poles and Scandinavians work together on a project. You can feel what is possible when diversity focuses on a common goal. Our last film, "Ein Tag im September" (A Day in September), was a German-Belgian co-production involving many different Europeans.

Question: *What is on your mind at the moment – personally, professionally, socially?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

We live in a time of constant overload and crisis: too much information, too many channels, too much "spin" and too much uncertainty. I am preoccupied with the question of how we can regain clarity – in messages, in

leadership, in Europe and on an interpersonal level. Not through detours, but through direct communication.

Question: *Where do you find your inner compass?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

On set. It's not theory that counts there, but results. "The shoot starts, no matter what." This attitude reminds me that agile leadership means commitment – and that decisions have to be made even when circumstances are not perfect. That saves resources. In my private life, I find balance through meditation and yoga.

II. Europe as a living space – lived experience

Question: *What does Europe mean to you – beyond flags and institutions?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

For me, Europe means mobility. Travelling from Paris to Prague, from Munich to Madrid with a camera in my bag – without borders, without barriers. Gaining interpersonal experiences on the ground is enormously valuable.

Question: *When did you first feel "European"?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

When I went to France at the age of 18 and later when travelling through Europe as a student. Interrail was a formative experience.

Question: *Were there moments when you felt unwelcome in Europe?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

Not really. But I have seen how bureaucracy and national egoism can almost cause good projects to fail. The small stuff takes away the power of the big stuff.

Question: *What do you miss in Europe?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

Courage. In art, in politics, in business. Courage to put things on stage before they are perfect. Courage to expose oneself to criticism – and more inter-European exchange without excessive bureaucracy.

III. Systems and people – power, powerlessness, change

Question: *Where exactly is Europe failing at the moment?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

In the clarity of communication and in bureaucracy. Politics often sounds like a bad script: too long, too complicated, lacking emotional depth – despite promises to the contrary.

Question: *Where is Europe succeeding in ways that we overlook?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

In everyday life. The fact that we can work, travel, produce and trade together as a matter of course is a civilisational masterpiece. We often only notice it when it starts to falter.

Question: *Who protects Europe – and from what?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

Europe must protect itself – through people who take responsibility: teachers, doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, cultural figures. But also through a free press and free art.

Question: *What needs to change so that Europe not only survives but thrives?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

Leadership must be tangible. We need fewer "panels" and more "premieres". Decisions that are visible and convey attitude.

It is important that we get into a common European "doing": less talk, more delivery.

IV. Technology, future, significance

Question: *What should technology be allowed to do in Europe – and what should it never be allowed to do?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

It can accelerate, simplify and connect. But it must never replace humans when it comes to attitude and responsibility.

Question: *What future do you want to help shape – and what future do you want to prevent?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

I want a future in which people learn to communicate clearly and directly again. I want to prevent a world in which we only talk to each other through filters and algorithms – instead of person to person. Technology must serve people, but it must not make them dependent.

Question: *What is preventing Europe from making progress?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

The fear of making mistakes. On set, the motto is: "Done is better than perfect." In Europe, we are often paralysed by the pursuit of perfection – and, unfortunately, by bureaucracy.

V. Humanity and responsibility

Question: *Where do you still experience genuine solidarity today?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

Europe is like a diverse film crew: a wide variety of people are expected to communicate and work together with as little friction as possible.

Question: *What does Europe need to relearn?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

Storytelling. Telling a shared story that inspires and leads away from nation-state thinking and backward orientation. Without history, there is no direction.

Question: *How can one live in Europe without becoming critical of Europe?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

By not just remaining a spectator, but becoming part of the ensemble. Those who play along lose their cynicism and gain positive experiences.

VI. Conclusion – Decision & Invitation

Question: *What would you like to give back to Europe?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

The experience that diversity works – when you have a common goal.

Question: *What do you want to protect Europe from?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

From arbitrariness. If everything is equally important, then in the end nothing is important. We need to set clear priorities for how we want to shape Europe together.

Question: *What would you do if you had 24 hours of European decision-making power?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

I would reduce bureaucracy and try to make Europe more tangible for people at all levels.

Question: *Who should we ask next?*

Mark von Seydlitz:

Young Europeans should be asked how they want to shape the future.

Learnings – "5 lessons from the film business for leadership in Europe"

1. The shoot must go on – no matter what happens.

In film, it is crucial to make decisions flexibly and quickly. The same should apply to Europe.

2. Casting is everything.

In film, it's not just the script that matters, but above all the cast. The right actors, a team with flair and creativity that works well together – they turn paper into reality. The same applies in organisations and politics: plans are important, but people make the decisions. Especially in times of skills shortages, renationalisation tendencies and high dynamics, "casting" for key roles in politics, business and culture is the decisive factor for success.

3. Planning amid uncertainty.

No shoot ever goes exactly according to plan. The weather changes, an actor falls ill, a technical detail goes wrong – and yet the film still has to be finished. That's why there are buffers, alternatives and emergency solutions. Companies today also operate in a state of constant uncertainty. Success does not come to those who control everything, but to those who have options in mind and still maintain momentum.

4. Making mistakes visible.

In film, the "dailies" are a ritual: you watch the rough cuts of the day – even if they are still unfinished. Mistakes, weaknesses, breaks – everything becomes visible. That is precisely where the strength lies. Because what you recognise early on can be corrected. Companies need the same attitude: transparency instead of cover-ups, feedback instead of whitewashing. Those who have the courage to openly show mistakes build trust – and resilience.

5. The courage to premiere.

When the film is finished, it seeks its audience. It doesn't matter whether every scene is perfect – the premiere is the moment when everything has to prove itself.

Organisations also have their premieres: product launches, pitches, restructuring, public statements. Those who spend too long perfecting things lose touch. The courage to premiere means stepping into the spotlight, being vulnerable – and thereby making an impact.

Thank you very much for your time, Mark!