

Göttweig Declaration 2014

Twenty years ago, the Austrian people clearly voted in favour of Austria's accession to the European Union. In the meantime, ten years have passed since the enlargement by ten central and south-eastern European countries; this has changed the appearance and the significance of the EU. Presently, however, there is frustration with reforms and integration in the EU as well as in its member states, a tendency that is even more pronounced when we look at the upcoming elections to the European Parliament. Low turnout, national discourses interfering with European issues, and the danger of increasing anti-European forces in the EU institutions are symptomatic of the people's chronic dissatisfaction with the European project. This trend must be counteracted by critically reviewing the status quo with the purpose of creating institutions that are able to act and take decisions for the following five years and of strengthening democracy in Europe.

Ever since Austria joined the European Union, the European Forum Wachau has dealt with basic questions on European integration and its further development in the (central) European context, always incorporating civil society.

In the light of the challenges described, it is of particular importance to deepen the discourse with European citizens and to critically review the current status of the European integration process, identifying possible solutions on a national and regional level in the interest of European citizens:

- 1.) It must be the goal of the Common Security and Defence Policy to guarantee comprehensive security for European citizens in an interconnected world. In December 2013, the first European Council on security and defence policy was held since the Treaty of Lisbon had come into force. The Council decisions form a basis for the future development of the Common Security and Defence Policy. In the years to come, efficient and effective security and defence policy will only be possible in cooperation with international organisations and third countries. It is the responsibility of the governments of the EU member states as well as of the European institutions to implement these decisions and to follow with joint actions. This can be achieved by deepening defence cooperation and by developing and making available the necessary civil and military capabilities.
- 2.) In June 2010 the European Council decided on "Europe 2020", the economic policy strategy intended to make Europe more competitive and lead it out of the financial and economic crisis. To make Europe more dynamic, more stable and more sustainable, it is necessary, however, to improve the integration

of member-state and European policies and to more closely link the individual policy areas (fiscal, employment, social and environmental policies). It must be the ultimate goal, whilst complying with the principle of subsidiarity, to coordinate economic policy better between the EU and the individual states and to advance a pan-European economy policy.

- 3.) In difficult times, when the EU member states' leeway of fiscal policy measures is limited and no liberalisation of global trade is to be expected within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) framework in the near future, bilateral free trade zones may provide most welcome growth stimuli. In addition, bilateral free trade agreements between the EU and its strategic partners such as the USA or Japan may serve as instruments of multilateral liberalisation and spur further liberalisation of global trade. Yet, negotiations on agreements of this kind must be carried out transparently and must guarantee that the sectoral minimum standards in the EU and on national levels remain in force or are improved.
- 4.) Culture becomes more and more relevant in the context of EU foreign relations. One of the reasons for this is the increasing awareness of the important contribution art and the creative sector make to the GDP. Another reason is the role that culture plays in transferring core European values across the globe. The network of European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) aims at promoting European cultural diversity and presents joint events in 88 clusters around the globe.

We not only need to Europeanise and globalise cultural relations but also need to further consolidate regional cooperation and promote the moving closer of societies and cultures within the EU and, in particular, within central Europe.

Göttweig, 18 May 2014