

Göttweig Declaration 2016

The European Union and its member states are confronted with a number of challenges putting European integration and solidarity to the test. There are several internal challenges such as reviving the European economy, maintaining social cohesion, Great Britain's pending EU exit, populism and tendencies towards renationalisation; however, there are also new external problems for Europe such as threats caused by global terrorism, migration and geopolitical confrontations. These challenges have caused more and more European citizens to lose confidence in the EU's capacity to solve problems and they trigger discussions on the added value of the EU. The EU and its member states are thus forced to focus intensively on the future development of the European integration process, in particular on the issue of re-establishing a uniform European positioning and more solidarity within the EU.

For more than twenty years, the European Forum Wachau has analysed and discussed basic questions of European integration and its further development in the (central) European context, always incorporating civil society.

In the light of the findings made it will be indispensable to deepen the discourse with European citizens and to critically review the current status of the European integration process, identifying possible solutions and improvements on a national and regional level in the interest of European citizens:

- 1.) In the 21st century, the EU and its member states are confronted with both a quantitative and a qualitative increase in security policy issues. Apart from the classical, traditional threat scenarios there are threats caused by – partly religiously fanatic – terrorism, immediately noticeable effects of conflicts taking place in distant regions, new forms of hybrid warfare and many more, all changing the subjective feeling of security for European citizens. In order to genuinely restore their feeling of security, the discussions held in drafting the EU Global Strategy should come up with a framework for transforming the EU into a credible security policy player. They should also create the conditions required for developing and deepening the EU's common foreign, security and defence policies and European competencies in terms of European solidarity.
- 2.) Regions are the cornerstones of everyday coexistence of the citizens of Europe. In times of global competition and global crises they bridge the gap between the needed cross-border exchange and maintaining regional identity. In the context of European subsidiarity it is important to define which problems are better solved on the European level as opposed to the

regional/local level. In doing so, European decision makers will be able to more clearly impart to the citizens of Europe the feeling of participating in decision-making processes.

- 3.) EU member states are faced with striking the right balance between, (a) comprehensive growth programs and ideas for expanding the Single Market and (b) measures stabilising national budgets. Meeting present and future climate protection targets poses enormous challenges to the economy and industry as well as to individuals. The goals of the Stability and Growth Pact are to be adhered to. At the same time, the basic structure of the European social model is to be kept up as a minimum amount of security for individuals. The EU member states are therefore required to muster the financial resources necessary for keeping up innovation and competitiveness. This will be vital in securing long-term growth and employment in Europe using new potential such as the digital single market and the Energy Union. Only innovation and sustainability will enable Europe to succeed in maintaining its position in global competition.
- 4.) Cultural diplomacy has been a time-tested instrument of international relations. It makes use of the fact that cultural exchange between states can contribute towards getting closer and promoting understanding. The EU endeavours to develop a strategy for a European cultural diplomacy and thereby establish cultural and educational exchange as an integral part of EU Foreign Affairs Policy; these attempts must be fully supported. Promoting direct (person-to-person) contact between artists, scientists and students as well as specific art projects are the best options for Europe to contribute towards global cultural diversity and thus also towards relieving tensions and solving conflicts all over the world, and in particular in the European neighbourhood.