

Fundamental Rights Forum 2016 for Rights, Respect, Reality: the Europe of Values
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and Sports

Mr President, your Excellences', Ladies and Gentlemen!

I have today the pleasure of welcoming you to the Viennese City Hall and to the first
Fundamental Rights Forum hosted by the City of Vienna.

Vienna is the world's best city to live in - according to international research studies.

I do believe that one important reason for this attribution is our inclusive policies and
commitment to fundamental human rights. After the atrocities that occurred during
World War II and the gruesome mistreatment of our fellow citizens' rights it was
important to rebuild Vienna with a particular focus on inclusion. This approach has
become part of our identity, of our daily customs and culture. It is therefore no
coincidence that the first UN-World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 was held
here in Vienna which was, with more than 7000 participants, the largest meeting on
human rights held at the time.

Besides of this, Vienna has a long tradition in of investing in high-quality public
infrastructure such as social housing, health care and education and – last not least
culture. Today Vienna is growing at high speed. Thus, with a high level of migration
and diversity, it is important to be accountable for human rights in all areas of our
competence.

Appropriately enough, in a City with more than 1.8 Million inhabitants Vienna is not
only host to more than 600.000 immigrants (25 % of the immigrants are for instance
students since Vienna is the largest university City in the German-speaking region)
but also Vienna hosts a remarkable number of important International Organisations -
the United Nations, the EUs Fundamental Rights Agency, the Organisation for

Security and Cooperation in Europe – to name just a few. The close cooperation in the past decades has been enriching and, as you can witness today, very successful.

Based on this approach we have declared human rights as a cross-cutting issue on all governmental levels in Vienna, formalising this strong culture of Human Rights that already existed. Hence, in 2014 through an official act, the Vienna City Council approved the declaration “Vienna – City of Human Rights” proclaiming itself a Human Rights City. An important step in this process was the establishment of the Human Rights Office in autumn of 2015, which worked together with the Fundamental Rights Agency to organise this Forum.

For all these reasons and more I cannot think of a place more suitable for the Fundamental Rights Forum than Vienna. It is a great honour that you put this trust in the City of Vienna. However, the challenges facing us today can only be tackled if we continue to collaborate together. With these final remarks I thank you all for coming and thank the Fundamental Rights Agency for organising this Forum and hope to see many more of them in the future.