

VIENNA DECLARATION

with a special focus on scenarios with / after Corona

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In its working session on January 31st and February 1st 2021 the international advisory board of the Vienna Congress, drawing on empirical findings and international experts from the fields of science and business, has the following orientations and perspectives for further development after Corona in the areas of democracy, health, and climate, digitization and regions:

Democracy

The restrictions imposed on the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens in numerous countries around the world in order to combat the Covid 19 pandemic require a sensitive handling of civil liberties and fundamental rights and a broad public debate about their value in the future. Restrictions necessary for health policy must be constitutionally secured and transparently made for a limited period. An expansion of state digital monitoring and control instruments for the surveillance of citizens is incompatible with the principles of liberal democracies. Dealing with corona deniers and ideologically motivated vaccination opponents is also a democratic political challenge in the coming months and years. Sociopolitical polarization along this question must be overcome with the means of constructive dialogue and evidence-based information.

Health

The Covid 19 crisis posed dramatic challenges to health and care systems around the world and pushed them to the limits of their capabilities. With the vaccination of large sections of the population with the vaccines approved for this purpose, the necessary basis for successfully and sustainably coping with the pandemic is secured. In order to achieve an appropriate vaccination coverage, well-founded, scientifically proven information and, in particular, medical expertise and advice is essential. Targeted tests are a useful instrument for avoiding lockdowns, which can massively endanger the economic and, as a result, social stability of states and regions, until the population is sufficiently vaccinated. Experience with the Covid-19 crisis underscores the need for the targeted expansion of a crisis-proof healthcare system, the provision of sufficient medical capacities and increased investment in medical research and development.

Climate

The Covid-19 crisis must not lead to climate protection being pushed off the international political agenda. Further mobilization of science and industry for climate protection is crucial to reach ambitious and transparent climate policy objectives. The challenges of climate protection require increased innovation policy efforts and the strategic promotion of key technologies such as hydrogen. Economic and ecological strength should go hand in hand in Europe. Modern framework conditions for climate protection also require the development of effective incentive systems for climate-friendly behavior in addition to traditional legislative instruments. The new US administration is to become an important international partner of the European Union for global climate protection. The common transatlantic goal must be to secure economic competitiveness and ecological sustainability.

Digitalisation

The digital transformation is a mega trend of our time that opens up new value creation and job potential. In order to benefit from this potential, well-founded strategic action in the key areas of successful digitization policy is necessary. This applies in particular to securing digital infrastructure (e.g. broadband, 5G), ensuring digital skills of the workforce, supporting SMEs in digital transformation and ensuring the fitness of schools and training for digitization. This is a prerequisite for Europe to survive in global competition with the USA and China and for European standards (e.g. in the area of artificial intelligence) to be visible and competitive on the world market. Digitization is a key strategy for successfully shaping the economic upswing after coping with the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuring it is sustainable.

Regions

Successful regions play a key role in economic strength and resilience. This applies on the one hand to transnational regions, but also to internal regions. Modern structural and infrastructure policy plays a key role so that rural regions in particular can develop successfully. The improvement of the infrastructural framework for rural regions affects not only the transport sector, but also digital infrastructures. They are a key to making rural regions more attractive and preventing rural exodus. More fairness for the regions means deliberately eliminating location disadvantages in rural areas and strengthening the country as a location in economic competition. Cross-border cooperation between regions still shows considerable potential in Europe and should be accelerated, especially with a view to regional growth potential. Regions are crucial players for a sustainable supply of raw materials and thus for crisis-proof economic development.