

# VIENNA DECLARATION

## „Europe of Tomorrow: Setting Directions“

Initiated by the experts and guests at the

### 22. Vienna Congress 2025

26<sup>th</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025

On the initiative of

**David Ungar-Klein**

Europe needs to get back on track. Inflation, high national debt, lack of political unity, increasing social hotspots, lack of social cohesion: What holds Europe together? What brings Europe forward? More than 50 international experts from five continents and 25 countries have gathered at the 22. Vienna Congress 2025 in order to define the top priorities for Europe:

#### **Competitiveness, Growth and Prosperity: Key Priorities for Europe**

Europe must become more attractive and competitive again. On behalf of the European Union (EU) two reports - „Letta-Report“ and „Draghi-Report“ - were published, containing measures and reform ideas to strengthen the EU in global competition. Both reports require significant amounts of financing for implementation. But one thing is certain: **the willingness to invest requires an attractive location with sustainable investment incentives**. In this context, the European Union and its 27 member states are in global competition with NAFTA (USA, Mexico, Canada) and the BRICS countries.

The **enormous amount of bureaucracy** is an immense burden for companies in Europe. Due to the fulfillment of bureaucratic requirements, activities that generate added value are increasingly pushed into the background. The bureaucratic effort is therefore increasingly becoming a brake on growth and innovation.

As a result of Europe's declining competitiveness and declining attractiveness as a location, it is to be expected that companies will relocate or at least relocate parts of their value chain abroad. In order to counteract this development, the following measures are necessary: expansion of infrastructure with a special focus on digital infrastructure, more funding for innovation and research, secure access to energy and raw materials at competitive prices, ensuring availability of skilled workers, strengthening work morale, reducing the tax burden and debureaucratisation.

#### **Building Bridges in a Divided Society**

Public discourse is increasingly perceived as being characterized by extreme positions. Recent media narratives and political campaigns often confront topics in a “black or white” way of thinking. **Constructive dialogue is disappearing**.

In this context, the quote by Voltaire **“I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it”** underlines that in a free society it is not about agreeing in every matter, but about respecting and protecting freedom of expression - one of the cornerstones of the democratic process. Constructive dialogue and building bridges can only be ensured by meeting, by talking and by negotiating.

Furthermore, disinformation has become a serious concern for societal cohesion and stability. Social media and new technologies such as AI have increased the scale and speed with which false or misleading information can reach its audiences.

It is crucial to set a focus on **critical thinking in the field of education** and to equip our society with the tools to evaluate arguments, distinguish facts from opinions and engage with information in a thoughtful way.

### **AI: Pandora's Box or Universal Problem-Solver?**

AI has begun to revolutionize industries. In healthcare, AI systems can detect diseases like cancer earlier and more accurately than human doctors and are leading to rapid advancements in medical diagnostics. In retail, AI is used to analyze consumer behavior and offer personalized recommendations, increasing conversion rates and customer loyalty. In the field of logistics, AI is being used to optimize fleet routes, reduce fuel consumption and improve delivery schedules, leading to cost savings and improved efficiency. As industries increasingly rely on AI and automation, **it is crucial that education systems evolve to meet new demands.**

However, **the benefits of AI depend on how it is designed and governed.** Without adequate ethical oversight, AI can unleash risks that may also undermine societal stability. Developing and using AI in a way that benefits society while minimizing negative consequences is one of the most pressing challenges in the field. Achieving this balance requires a **combination of ethical frameworks** such as transparency and accountability in the design and implementation process. Additionally, **regulation, monitoring and human oversight** are essential to ensure AI evolves in ways that promote societal well-being and prevent harmful consequences.

### **Competitiveness and the Role of Science, Innovation and Education**

In today's rapidly evolving world, nations need to recognize the role of science and education in driving economic growth, innovation and global competitiveness. **Scientific research drives the development of new technologies** and solutions that address global challenges, from healthcare to energy efficiency. Innovation, fueled by creativity and entrepreneurship, **leads to the creation of cutting-edge industries** and job opportunities, strengthening economies. A strong educational system cultivates a skilled and adaptable workforce capable of navigating the complexities of the modern economy, **ensuring that nations remain at the forefront of global competition.** Ultimately, investing in science, innovation, and education lays the foundation for long-term economic success and social progress.