

## Public benefit foundations: European conference opens in Vienna

Vienna (ots) -

**For three days (18-20 Oct.) 400 guests will discuss issues relating to the general topic “From crisis to opportunity – How can philanthropy accelerate sustainable change?”**

The city of Vienna is currently the European capital of philanthropy: for three days some 400 representatives of philanthropic foundations and organisations operating across Europe are meeting to discuss emerging trends and possible solutions to the climate crisis, democracy development, philanthropy, and society. The conference kicked off on Monday (18 Oct.) at Gartenbaukino cinema with a short trailer specially produced for the conference, featuring Austrian artist and musician André Heller.

In his capacity as chairman of the supervisory board of ERSTE Foundation, Andreas Treichl welcomed the guests and introduced them to Kenan al Bared, a student who had come to Vienna as a refugee and talked about his experiences. EFC president Angel Font (“la Caixa” Foundation) stressed: *“The current huge challenges – the climate crisis, democracy development, global inequality – can only be solved together in and with society. The coronavirus crisis and the rapid development of vaccines have impressively demonstrated this.”*

Delphine Moralis, CEO of the European Foundation Centre since 2020, explained in her introduction to the opening plenary: *“Everyone is connected to everyone else, and as philanthropic foundations we can build the bridges for solutions – from crisis to opportunity. Currently, every foundation should also be a climate foundation, that is to say putting a climate lens on all its activities.”*

Treichl urged his guests: *“The philanthropic world and the corporate world need to take the same line and call for decisive action from politics – this trend will grow.”* Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen (LEGO Foundation) addressed the issue of the young generation and the responsibility of adults: *“Creativity is not limited to children; adults should allow themselves to be inspired by them. What we do now will determine what will become of the world for them. Foundations can take more risks here, moving ahead of governments and administrations and leading the way.”* Activist Kumi Naidoo also appealed: *“The philanthropic sector now needs to get more involved in solving the interconnected crises. We cannot simply address the symptoms, but we have to be addressing the root causes of the crisis: what’s needed now is system innovation, system redesign and system transformation.”* This requires the creativity of foundations and fresh perspectives from young people, he added.

The round of experts from civil society and philanthropy was followed by representatives from politics. Mayor of Budapest Gergely Karácsony, who only recently announced his withdrawal from next year’s parliamentary elections in Hungary, stated in his speech how civic councils in Budapest had discussed environmental projects and prepared them for a vote; these had then been adopted and implemented by the city council. The Mayors’ Forum, which is also supported by ERSTE Foundation, demonstrates how philanthropy can collaborate with politics. *“Progress and reform from the top down is not enough. Direct democracy and representative democracy must work together,”* Karácsony is convinced.

The last speaker was Mārtiņš Staķis, mayor of Latvian capital Riga since 2020. In his speech, he explained that the purpose of cities is not limited to cleaning its sidewalks. *“They also have a global responsibility. Only cities that actively encourage and support civic engagement will be successful in the future,”* Staķis explained. To this end, a digital discussion platform was also implemented in Riga.

The recording of the event is available at <https://streaming.ots.at/streaming/efc-conference-opening/> (from 18 Oct./approx. 5 p.m.).

**The event also features showcases, discussions, keynote speeches – Wednesday’s closing plenary is available via live stream**

The conference programme is generally divided into four thematic tracks. On Tuesday afternoon mainly Austrian foundations will discuss their work in Viennese coffee houses and special locations such as magdas Hotel, the Wiener Zentralfriedhof (Vienna’s largest cemetery), the Burgtheater, the Steinhofgründe area, the Erste Financial Life Park and the Türkis Rosa Lila Villa LGBTIQ community centre. On Wednesday, 20 October, the closing plenary will be streamed from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., featuring a keynote speech by Laurence Tubiana, CEO of the European Climate Foundation. (Link: <https://streaming.ots.at/streaming/efc-conference-closing/>)

General information on the event in German and English is available at: <https://science.apa.at/medienkooperation/erste-stiftung/>

**About the conference:** This year’s annual conference of the European Foundation Centre (initially planned for early 2020) takes place in Vienna for the first time. The event in the Austrian capital is organised by a host committee chaired by ERSTE Foundation and including the Verband für gemeinnütziges Stiften (Association of Public Benefit Foundations), Caritas Foundation Austria, the Central European University Budapest Foundation, the Essl Foundation, the European Forum Alpbach non-profit private foundation, the Katharina Turnauer Private Foundation, Nadace České spořitelny, Nadácia Slovenskej sporitelne, Porticus, the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Stiftung Mercator. Guests represent the entire spectrum of philanthropic activity across Europe and the world with institutions including Bertelsmann Stiftung, IKEA Foundation, LEGO Foundation, Porticus, Stiftung Mercator, Open Society Foundations, ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, Fondation de France, and “la Caixa” Foundation.

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