

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the kind invitation. It is a great honour for me to represent Andreas Mailath-Pokorny, Executive City Councillor for Cultural Affairs of the City of Vienna, here today.

I would now like to give you a brief overview of cultural diversity in Vienna. We Viennese are proud that Vienna is a prime cultural metropolis, and we are happy to underline this fact as often as we can. We also like to emphasise Vienna's great history and traditions. At the same time, we are fully aware that many responsibilities arise from tradition and history. Tradition is not a couch where you can relax, it is a responsibility of the present and future. This is why we are committed to cultural diversity, to contemporary art and to a type of art that is exciting, brave and contradictory and, sometimes, even provoking for the general public.

Cultural diversity did not appear from nowhere – it is the result of the demographic development in this city that has always been a melting pot of nations and cultures. The City of Vienna is on the side of diversity and acknowledges the fact that Vienna is a melting pot, in particular in times like these, when some political actors are busy denying this fact.

Cultural diversity is a challenge. It can be overwhelming for some but in the opinion of the responsible politicians in Vienna it is above all a wonderful asset that we want to protect and promote.

I would like to illustrate this with an example from the music industry.

Diversity is an extremely important factor in the areas of culture and music. The City of Vienna strongly supports diversity as mainstream topic in all branches of music. The high quality of music in Vienna is primarily due to the Viennese audience that has always paid particular attention to musicians with a migration background.

Many musicians and composers of classical music such as Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms were migrants, and we are committed to continuing this tradition!

Our most important classical concert halls such as the *Konzerthaus* have special concert series every year such as “Spot on Yiddishkeit” or “Spot on Turkey”.

The jazz club “Porgy & Bess” and the “*Ost Klub*”, for example, have shown that diversity is not only a topic for the so-called high culture. The “*Ost Klub*”, founded by Matthias Angerer, has become an internationally renowned hub between East and West, between North and South.

Clubs like FLUC and youth clubs like FLEX address the multiethnic identity of Vienna all year round.

The participation of all people irrespective of their social background is a vital part of leftist cultural policies. Andreas Mailath Pokorny has coined a phrase that reflects the most important criteria of Vienna’s cultural policies of the past few years: Culture is for everyone!

This is why we focus on communicating culture to all the people who live in Vienna and also to those who come here for a short visit. But above all we are aware of promoting diversity in the small neighbourhoods of our city that cameras and press agencies are not interested in because there is no glitter and sparkle but real, everyday life: in the districts!

The association “*Basiskultur Wien*” is one of the most important instruments of our cultural activities in the districts. The association works together with the people in the districts including small cultural initiatives, district museums, amateur theatre groups, hobby musicians and hobby writers. They organise district festivals with performances of artists and musicians who have strong links with the neighbourhood and district. The Viennese mentality is clearly perceivable at these district festivals that are called “We are Vienna. Festivals in the districts.” and that reflect the typical Viennese atmosphere in the best way. I would like to invite you to come and enjoy some of our district festivals this year.

It is essential for a well-functioning society that young people participate in cultural life because their creativity and initiative forms the basis for the future development of culture, which is best perceivable in the music industry. A few years ago, the City of Vienna therefore initiated the project “Cash for Culture” that aims at providing young musicians with money in an easy and direct manner. “Cash for Culture” provides young people with the opportunity to plan and stage their own performances and record their own albums. The project is very

popular, especially with young people of the second and third generations in Vienna. Hip hop is the most popular type of music, and “Cash for Culture” has realised a large number of hip hop projects.

But not all young people make their own music, most of them prefer to consume music. This is why it is particularly important to include young people when we say “culture is for everyone”. We thought about how we could best raise the interest of young people who may not like classical theatre or opera at first glance. Apprentices and young employees often don’t have the time to go and see a musical or an opera, and sometimes they are not interested in this type of art at all. However, you can learn to appreciate art, which is why the youth branch of the trade union and Executive City Councillor Mailath-Pokorny have jointly initiated a new project called “Go for Culture” where apprentices have the opportunity to receive cheap tickets for theatre, opera or musical performances or even get free admission. Last month we sent a letter to all apprentices in Vienna informing them about the new project and we hope and trust that they will be interested in this great offer.

It is one of the features of Andreas Mailath-Pokorny’s cultural policies that cultural diversity is reflected in the cityscape: When high culture meets popular culture and vice versa you know that you are in the *Brunnenpassage* cultural centre. The *Brunnenmarkt* neighbourhood could be compared with the borough of Queens in New York, where you can experience multiculturalism and a multiethnic lifestyle. Opera audiences listen to East-Anatolian folk music in the *Brunnenmarkt* neighbourhood and people from Turkey, running market stalls there, listen to opera performances. This is Vienna at its best!

The *Brunnenpassage* cultural centre also offers a varied music programme for young people and for producers and consumers of music and dance performances from all around the world.

I would also like to talk about another highlight of urban cultural life in Vienna: The Vienna Festival or *Wiener Festwochen*. This year’s opening will focus on the final of the Eurovision Young Musicians competition – one of the most important classical music competitions with a focus on promoting cultural exchange across all borders. The final of the Eurovision Young Musicians competition will be broadcast on TV throughout Europe.

“Street Academy” organises 10 workshops in the framework of the Vienna Festival series “Into the City”. The workshops are mostly held in locations in public space where young

people usually meet such as “Balkanbeat” and “Oriental Ska” in the *Brunnenviertel* neighbourhood.

“Street Academy” has also organised the successful project “This is my thing”, where 100 young people stage a demonstration, music theatre and performances. They carry posters and take a truck with a huge sound system and march in a star-shaped formation to *Urban-Loritz Platz*. They are the actors.

Other festivals, which focus on diversity, such as “Salam Orient”, “Balkan Fever”, the Klezmer Festival and “voicemania” have already become an important part of festival life in Vienna.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I could talk for hours but I think you have understood that diversity is not only an empty term for us. We are committed to diversity, to the exchange between the old and the young, between modern aspects and tradition, between Vienna and the world. Vienna has a future to look forward to if we continue on the path of diversity that we have been committed to for a long time.

Diversity is an aspect of everyday life in Vienna, and it is a demographic and cultural fact. If we denied diversity, we would lie to ourselves and to the world.

On this note, I would like to congratulate the organisers of this unique European Forum, and thank you very much for this important initiative also on behalf of Executive City Councillor Andreas Mailath-Pokorny. I would like to wish us all an interesting and stimulating day!

Thank you for your attention!