

14th Vienna Economic Forum - Vienna Future Dialogue 2017

For the 14th time, the November issue of the Vienna Economic Forum VEF brought together high-ranking representatives and visionaries from business, politics and diplomacy from the region, Europe and neighbouring regions at the Novomatic Forum on November 6, 2017 under the motto "Economy Meets Politics".

At the official opening, the CEO of Novomatic AG, host and Vice President of the VEF, Mag. Harald Neumann and the Secretary General of the VEF, former Ambassador Dr. Elena Kirtcheva, together with Dr. Guenther Rabensteiner, President of the VEF, and Dr. Heinz Fischer, President of Austria (2004-2016) and patron of the VEF, welcomed high-ranking participants from 38 countries of the world. In his opening speech, H. E. affirmed Zoran Zaev, Prime Minister of Macedonia, underlined the important role of the VEF in meeting the challenges of the region, in particular with regard to EU integration and the promotion of appropriate instruments to strengthen economic and political cooperation for the benefit of citizens and businesses.

This year's motto of the 14th Vienna Economic Forum - Vienna Future Dialogue 2017 was "Economy meets politics" and underlined the need for cooperation between business and politics. In this context, the dynamics and associated changes in the digitalisation of all areas of life and the role of regional cooperation as part of European integration were also discussed.

In her opening speeches, Dr. Guenther Rabensteiner, President of the VEF, and former Ambassador Dr. Elena Kirtcheva, Secretary General of the VEF, stressed the necessity of this pro-European economic platform in order to enable further establishment and better development of economic regional cooperation from Vienna. Both thanked the partners of VEF for a 14 year success story.

The morning session, moderated by Dr. Ognian Donev, Chairman of the Board of Directors & Executive Director of Sopharma PLC and Vice President of VEF, focused on "We live in a digital time! Visions and investors' response ". Pragmatically oriented descriptions, empirical values and visions about the role of investments as a motor for competitiveness and growth as well as the effects of global digitisation were exchanged by informative contributions of the following participants:

Main Statement

- Mr. Alexander Riedl, Deputy Head of Unit, Digital Economy and Skills, DG CONNECT European Commission

Participants

- Mr. Arda Ermut, President, Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey (ISPAT), President of the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), Member of the Board of VEF
- H.E. Dr. Kocho Angjushev, Deputy Prime Minister in Charge of the Economic Affairs of Macedonia
- H.E. Valdrin Lluka, Minister of Economic Development of Kosovo
- Mr. Emmanuel Forest, CEO, BOUYGUES Europe SA, Belgium, Member of the Board of VEF
- Dr. Dorothee Ritz, General Manager, Microsoft Austria
- Mr. Gordan Milinić, Director, Foreign Investment Promotion Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Dr. Stephan Pachinger, Partner, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, Austria, Member of VEF
- Dr. Florin Vodiță, Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister of Romania

The subsequent round table discussion in the afternoon was moderated by former Ambassador Victor Jackovich, President of Jackovich International LLC, USA, and member of the Board of Directors of VEF, and was devoted to the topic "Regional cooperation as a part of the European integration".

The high-ranking representatives from business and government level discussed the necessity of cooperation according to the motto "Economy meets politics". Concrete ideas, visions, projects and proposals for solutions in different fields of application and from different perspectives were presented in a lively discussion.

Main Statement

- Mag. Wilhelm Molterer, Managing Director, European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), based in Luxembourg, Former Vice-Chancellor of Austria

Participants

- H.E. Zoran Zaev, Prime Minister of Macedonia, Patron of VEF
- Mag. Heinz Messinger, Managing Director, AME International GmbH, Austria, Board of VEF
- H.E. Dragica Sekulić, Minister of Economy of Montenegro
- Dr. Gabriel LANSKY, Partner, LANSKY, GANZGER+partner, Austria, Member of the Board of VEF
- Prof. Dr. Günther Ofner, Member of the Executive Board, Flughafen Wien AG, Austria, Board VEF
- Mr. Hakan Ateş, CEO, DenizBank Financial Services Group, Chairman of DenizBank AG, Member of VEF
- Mag. Peter Lennkh, Member of the Board, Corporate Banking, Raiffeisen Bank International AG, Austria, Member of VEF
- Amb. Gazmend Turdiu, Deputy Secretary-General, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), based in Sarajevo, Strategic Partner of VEF

The lively discussion paves the way for a joint development of the regional economy and all participants agreed that the 14th Vienna Economic Forum - Vienna Future Dialogue 2017 is the right platform and instrument at the right time to provide a genuine, relevant and sustainable impetus for the joint development of the region as part of a united Europe.

At the end of the panel discussion, during the Vienna Economic Forum Award ceremony, Dr. Ognian Donev, Vice President of the VEF, received the award for Sopharma PLC as co-operating partner of the year 2017, and Dr. Akkan Suver, President of the Marmara Group Foundation, was named Strategic Partner of the year 2017.

In addition, the future signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Serbian Association of Economists and Vienna Economic Forum was announced.

During the forum, Gf. Vice President of the OstWestWirtschaftsForum Bayern (OWWF), Hermann Poenisch, the President of the Vienna Economic Forum, DI Dr. Guenther Rabensteiner and former Ambassador Dr. Elena Kirtcheva signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the future cooperation between the OWWF and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Mr. Arda Ermut, President of the Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey (ISPAT) and President of the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), Member of the Executive Board of the VEF, and the President of the VEF, DI Dr. Gu?ntner Rabensteiner and Secretary-General of the VEF. Botschafterin a. D. Dr. Elena Kirtcheva signed a cooperation agreement which ensures the continuity of the successful cooperation between ISPAT and VEF.

At the subsequent Farewell Reception, the concluding thoughts and conclusions were exchanged between all participants and speakers in a festive atmosphere and thus marked the end of another successful Vienna Economic Forum. The importance and relevance of this platform has once again proved its worth and will reach a further high point at the 15th Vienna Economic Forum - Vienna Future Dialogue 2018 on 12 November 2018 as part of the 15th anniversary celebrations.