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## **The Vienna Forum for Democracy and Human Rights begins its work**



As of 19 February 2021, a new institution in the field of human rights starts its work. An interdisciplinary team composed by leading Austrian human rights experts safeguards the development of praxis-oriented

human rights research.

*Marion Wisinger*, long-term Secretary General of the Austrian League for Human Rights (Österreichische Liga für Menschenrechte), says: "Especially now we need institutions like the Vienna Forum for Democracy and Human Rights! That is why I am happy to be part of the board of the Vienna Forum together with *Maria Berger*, *Ulrike Lunacek*, *Thomas Höhne*, *Manfred Nowak* and *Hannes Tretter*. “

The Vienna Forum for Democracy and Human Rights is not a completely new foundation, but the continuation and expansion of the work of the Research Association (BIM-FV) of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights. Since 1996, the Association – also founded by *Manfred Nowak* and *Hannes Tretter* in 1992 – has conducted impact-oriented applied research projects which fell out of the strongly theoretically oriented scope of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights (BIM). Thus, the Vienna Forum builds on 25 years of experience in the implementation of human rights. The activities of the Forum are supported by an interdisciplinary advisory board consisting of numerous renowned scientists and experts from the fields of politics, justice, administration, media, civil society, arts and culture.

### **What are the tasks of the Forum?**

*Manfred Nowak* and *Hannes Tretter*, in line with the views of all other board members, clarify: "The Vienna Forum for Democracy and Human Rights is active at national, European and international levels. Its central task is to provide and foster the implementation of scientifically based ideas and recommendations for securing and strengthening democracy, rule of law and human rights. More than ever, practice-based research, teaching and educational work are required to contribute necessary criticism and, above all, meaningful approaches to solutions.“

Therefore, the Vienna Forum's **2021 research programme** focuses on essential current and future-oriented topics. *Ulrike Lunacek* and *Hannes Tretter* emphasise that these include "climate and the environment, poverty and inequality, asylum and migration, crisis management (especially regarding the COVID-19 pandemic), and participation of civil society in political and constitutional decision-making processes".

Another central task of the Vienna Forum is to continue the **educational work** of the former BIM-FV for different target groups. One example is the *polis* centre, which was founded in 2006 and is headed by *Patricia Hladschik*, coordinating "numerous projects with a focus on political and human rights education". Last but not least, human rights issues shall be approached and discussed through cultural and artistic means. According to *Manfred Nowak*, the Vienna Forum is also particularly concerned with promoting young scientists and students through "academic start-ups" and project-related research stays.

The Vienna Forum further plans to scientifically prepare and accompany **strategic litigation** in human rights and rule of law matters. *Maria Berger* and *Thomas Höhne* highlight that "this is specifically about strengthening civil society engagement in the implementation of human rights at all levels".

Human rights, democracy and rule of law gain an even stronger voice with the Vienna Forum for Democracy and Human Rights. And with the cooperation of other institutions engaged in this field, we will make sure to be heard.

## Contact, requests and further information:

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