

PRESS RELEASE

Providing a future for the next generation

Developing a climate-resilience strategy in Germany, Europe and worldwide is crucial for future generations in light of advancing climate change. It is essential for the continued existence of humanity and life on earth. Such a strategy will necessarily require a transformation of society and the economy towards a sustainable way of life and sustainable production. How to achieve this goal is the topic scientists from the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and of Social Sciences will be discussing with experts and young people from European cities and regions at the European Climate Resilience Summit on August 28 and 29 in Vienna. The summit's partners are the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC). The summit will conclude with a call to action, including an appeal for stakeholders to connect within European networks and shape the required change.

Gütersloh, Vienna – August 27, 2025. The goal of the climate conference in Vienna is to give local stakeholders – and young people in particular – a voice. Local communities and various interest groups will be included in the discussions and decision-making processes. In addition, they will exchange ideas and experiences and create robust networks that can take action both locally and on a wider scale. “Innovative and far-reaching measures must be developed and implemented in Europe’s cities, districts and regions as part of comprehensive climate-protection solutions,” says Brigitte Mohn, Bertelsmann Stiftung Executive Board Chair, who will participate in the summit. “Only then will coming generations have a chance of not merely seeing and understanding the risks, but responding to them as well.”

The mayors of Europe’s major cities have also been invited to attend the event, since they are the ones who bear responsibility vis-à-vis local residents and who must assess and manage the risks. Those invited include Michael Ludwig, mayor of Vienna; Anne Hidalgo, mayor of Paris; Matteo Lepore, mayor of Bologna; Ricardo Rio, mayor of Braga (Portugal); and Henriette Reker, mayor of Cologne.

The summit is the fifth in a series of seven events organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences worldwide, including in the United States, Africa and Europe. The Bertelsmann Stiftung is serving as a partner to the European gathering in Vienna by contributing funding and knowledge, especially in its core areas of expertise.

Transition to greater sustainability

“Involving local communities and municipalities is crucial to ensure climate resilience,” says Wim van Saarloos, president of EASAC and professor emeritus of theoretical physics at Leiden University. The climate-resilience strategy rests on three pillars. Until now, the first

pillar – reducing global warming – has been key. That means lowering greenhouse gas emissions, achieving the goal of climate neutrality by 2050 and limiting the global rise in temperatures to less than two degrees Celsius. The second pillar is recognizing that humanity and its living environment must adapt to the conditions of climate change, which can no longer be stopped. This adaptation must begin at the local level. The third pillar is social change towards more sustainability. “Social change means a fundamental shift in people’s values and behavior towards greater global sustainability,” says Brigitte Mohn.

Giving young people a voice

Intergenerational responsibility begins today with the involvement of young people in the summit. Their active participation is an integral part of the event. “If we work together with young people, adaptation will become a movement – not just a plan,” says Katja Čič of the WHO Youth Council. “Young people see and feel the risks – and the solutions – more clearly than most others do.” Twelve working groups will discuss the various aspects of climate resilience, with each group led by young participants. They will work in teams to develop recommendations for taking action, which will then be adopted in a plenary session at the end of the day as a call to action. One focus will be justice and the protection of poor and particularly vulnerable social groups, especially children. The call to action is meant to serve as a change agenda for young people and their partners and allies worldwide, so they can turn their visions and solutions for healthy life on our planet into reality.

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About the Bertelsmann Stiftung: Inspiring people. Shaping the future.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung is committed to enabling social participation for everyone – politically, economically and culturally. Our programs include Education and the Next Generation, Democracy and Social Cohesion, Digitalization and the Common Good, Europe’s Future, Health, and Sustainable Social Market Economies. In our work, we focus on people, since only they can change the world and make it better. We share knowledge, promote expertise and develop solutions. A nonprofit foundation, the Bertelsmann Stiftung was established in 1977 by Reinhard Mohn.

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