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Article
Welcome Speech by Hep Monatzeder

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Welcome Speech by

HEP MONATZEDER
Deputy Lord Mayor, City of Munich

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel very honoured to be able to welcome you today – also on behalf of Lord Mayor Christian Ude – to the Reception of the City of Munich on the occasion of this top-level Economic Summit. And I can assure you at the beginning I could not think of a better venue than the Bavarian capital city to discuss economic issues of Europe’s future with high-ranking representatives of the international economy. This year, the summit is entitled “Europe and the Demographic Challenge”. This subject is of greatest significance even for the City of Munich because the cities, as the focal points of growth, are especially affected by this development. We have to respond to the challenges of the demographic change – in particular – to solidify and further improve the competitiveness of Munich.

The forecast for Germany of the Institut für Entwicklungsplanung und Strukturforschung (IES) expects a loss of population of 2.6 percent between 2004 and 2020. However, the loss is not evenly distributed all over Germany. Leaving alone the booming economic core areas of East Germany, the forecast drop in population will be felt strongest there with a loss of 5.9 percent. There will be no uniform development in Europe in this respect – the more as a full reproduction rate is not reached by any of the European states.

The situation for Munich is completely different, fortunately. In fact, the Bavarian capital city is the metropolis in Germany which can distance itself to some degree from the federal tendency with an expected population growth of 6.3 percent between 2004 and 2020. In recent years, a growth of birth rates was registered in Munich which is meanwhile exceeding the number of deaths.

We maintain that various municipal initiatives launched by the city government to make the city more family-friendly. It is true, however, that the forecast growth in population is mainly due to a continuing positive balance of in-migration. It can be said that local governments can only be competitive and fit for the future, if they succeed in keeping and attracting young people and families on the spot. This fact tends to move “family-friendliness” as locational factor into focus. Therefore, the City Council recently passed a new Directive for a Children and Family Policy within the framework of the “Perspective Munich” – the strategic urban development concept of the City of Munich. Suitable and attractive frame conditions for young families require, apart from the classical provision of day-care facilities for children, also initiatives in the fields of housing, health and education. Very important in this context is also a political discussion with local firms in order to assure family-friendly frame conditions at the workplace. With the help of the new Directive the future tasks in the field of municipal childcare and family policy will be put in focus. And the Munich City Council will provide funds amounting to 1.2 Million € to provide for this task.

For many years, the City of Munich has paid attention to the extension of childcare facilities. However, to enable all children to have access to day-care facilities, from year one to school age, local governments alone would be over-burdened. We are happy to say that recent discussions have provided this political task with a higher level of priority. However, talk is not enough, actions are needed now. The federal and state government are called upon to make contributions – together with local governments towards a solution – and to reach an agreement on an acceptable model of finance. Furthermore, all local actors and firms need to be involved in the implementation as well.

The demographic change will also lead to growing competition of businesses and firms for qualified staff. This means that only such economic locations will reap the benefits of a positive economic development who succeed in attracting “talents” from elsewhere. To ensure that Munich will remain a
young, dynamic city, a selective immigration program for young people will be required.

For this purpose we initiated a number of activities which I would like to present with two examples. To strengthen the competitiveness of the conurbation Munich we stepped up international marketing-efforts. Even with regard to next year’s forthcoming 850th Anniversary of the Foundation of Munich, we will set priorities to present and advertise Munich as an open and tolerant city. In addition, within the framework of the City-promoted Environmental Consultation Project “ÖKO-PROFIT” Munich firms are motivated to act with social responsibility.

The demographic change also signifies that the share of persons over 65 of the total population will be increasing. In recent years the City has therefore continually developed its offerings for this target group.

Let me now come to the end of my remarks:

I tried to explain how Munich is getting ready for the demographic change and what measures the city will undertake to buffer it. Munich’s birth rate, which has been positive for years, goes to prove, that we are on the right path, when we promote the speedy extension of day-care facilities for children and youths. However, we can be meeting the challenges of the demographic change of Europe’s societies only by working together, and this applies to all social forces as well as to all political levels.

Thank you for your attention.