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INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE: V4+GERMANY: IMPLEMENTING THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL - OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Heinrich Kreft – Kristina Kurze*

On 22-24 June 2022, the conference "V4+Germany: Implementing the European Green Deal - Opportunities and Challenges" was held at Andrásy University Budapest (AUB) with the support of the Visegrad Fund.

During the Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrád Group, AUB and its partners, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the German-Hungarian Institute for European Cooperation at Mathias Corvinus Collegium, Institute of Public Affairs, the Pan-European University, the Metropolitan University Prague and the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, organised a conference for the second time. The first conference took place in 2018 during the previous Hungarian Visegrád-Presidency. The aim of this event was to connect people from the Visegrád countries and Germany, promote dialogue and thus strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation between the countries. Around 50 young participants and experts, mostly from Hungary, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, came together to discuss the opportunities and challenges of implementing the European Green Deal. Dr. **Heinrich Kreft** (AUB) and Dr. **Kristina Kurze** (AUB) were in charge of the content of this year's conference.

As a prelude to the event, the participants met on 22 June 2022 in sunny summer weather for a get-together at the **Várkert Bazár**, which housed the seat of the Presidency. After a short welcome by **András Lázár**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Dr. **Heinrich Kreft**, a Budapest rally began, where the young participants had to solve various tasks in small groups in order to get to know each other and the city of Budapest. In parallel, the speakers were invited

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to a dinner at the invitation of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

On the main day, the event began with welcome speeches by Pro-Rector Prof. Dr **Stefan Okruch**, AUB, **Krisztina Varju**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, **Michael Winzer**, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and Dr **Bence Bauer**, German-Hungarian Institute for European Cooperation. They emphasised the importance of the European Green Deal, which has become even more urgent as a result of the Russian attack on Ukraine in recent months. This attack represents a turning point for Europe and has shaken Europe's existing security and energy supply architecture. The question of how to achieve energy security and ambitious climate protection in a socially acceptable way has therefore become even more important.

The welcoming speeches were followed by two keynote presentations by **Rafal Fabianowicz**, PhD student at AUB, and **Kevin Oswald**, Konrad Adenauer Foundation. In his presentation, Mr. **Fabianowicz** dealt with questions on the extent to which the European Green Deal could herald the turn of the times and whether the European Union could implement the Green Deal as planned even under the new framework conditions. Mr. **Oswald** focused on the climate and energy policy of the EU and Germany in principle and in all its shades and challenges as well as in the light of the Ukraine war.

During the subsequent panel discussion, which was attended by high-ranking state secretaries from Hungary and Slovakia as well as from the business and scientific communities, the topic was further discussed in a lively manner from a political, economic and scientific perspective. In addition to different assessments, for example on the relevance of nuclear power in the future energy mix, many commonalities were also revealed: Above all, cohesion in the EU was affirmed by all panellists in view of the great challenges.

Afterwards, the participants discussed in five internationally mixed working groups different aspects of the European Green Deal - such as the implementation at global, EU and national levels, the economic basis for the Green Deal as well as citizen participation. The results were then presented in a panel discussion. In the intensive discussions, it became clear how crucial the topic is to the young participants and how much they advocate for quick action by those with political responsibility.

The participants pointed out that it would be essential for the EU to gradually reduce its energy dependence on other countries. It would also be important for each EU member state to formulate its own goals. That way these goals could be easier achieved and the EU could act as a role model, otherwise there is a danger

that the EU loses its credibility regarding this topic.

Another point raised was sustainable mobility. Among other things, it was emphasised that it would be important to set up high-capacity charging stations, to make public transport more effective and attractive, and to establish environmental zones in large cities. Furthermore, the policy recommendation was formulated that the EU should attach stricter conditions to the use of nuclear energy.

Regarding climate policy, different aspects should be taken into consideration. For example, small towns would need other solutions than large cities. Furthermore, it would be necessary to involve the population in the various processes so that they perceive climate protection as their own responsibility. It was also noted that the population could be motivated by sharing the positive results that have already been achieved.

Moreover, the role of education in achieving the goals was emphasised. The educational institutions could make a massive contribution to ensuring that a generation grows up for which environmental protection, climate policy and sustainability are self-evident topics. All in all, the young participants were very engaged and they brought multiple perspectives to the conference.

On the last day, an upcycling workshop took place at Mathias Corvinus Collegium, where the young participants were instructed to make a card holder out of old paper milk containers. This illustrated that sustainability starts in small ways and that we can all make a contribution in our everyday lives.

A booklet on the results of the event will be published in English in autumn. Subsequently, two more online events are planned for late 2022 and early 2023.