

Dear Vice-President Römer!

Distinguished guests from the European Commission!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Good morning and welcome to Vienna! It's an honor for me to speak here today.

Vienna, a city with so many different nationalities and cultures is certainly the perfect place to host today's event. Diversity affects all of us. With almost one in five persons in Austria having migrant background, diversity is not a by-product – it is a reality.

As many of you here are aware the population structure of Austria has changed over the last decades. People, mostly from the Balkans and Turkey, came to Austria and helped building up our economy. Today Austria is a diverse society and we have to work together to make the most of its potential.

The objective of a diversity Charta has always been the better integration of migrants into the receiving societies. A diversity strategy is a tool to show respect for people with different cultures, backgrounds and languages. Of course, new challenges have come along with increased diversity. From the very beginning it has been our main concern to make the Austrian public debate about integration more objective. Our approach to establishing integration policies is that integration is based on efforts. Every member of our society, regardless of the ethnic background, is empowered to actively take part in all aspects of our society. We have to make sure to provide the framework for this active contribution.

At the same time the efforts and contributions of migrants should be recognized and appreciated. Everybody must have the same opportunities and chances in order to make full use of their potential. Enterprises play an important role in the integration process. We believe that at work, one is in the first place a colleague and a co-worker and not a foreigner. An early entry into the labor market is one of the factors that can contribute to the feeling of belonging and successful integration.

Another essential aspect is the recognition of qualifications and skills acquired abroad. We consider mentoring an important tool to secure labor market integration and we are glad that the Austrian Chamber of Commerce is our partner in the so-called “mentoring for migrants” project. Without migrants and without immigration the Austrian economy would face high labor shortage, especially in the area of skilled workers. As a first step to attract qualified migrants we introduced a criteria-based migration system called “Red-White-Red Card” in 2011. Of course, also companies play a very important role in this process. Therefore, I’m glad that Austria is among the 11 European countries which have already introduced the Diversity Charta. I hope that this event helps draw further attention to this great project.

I would like to thank the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, and especially Mrs. Jank for your great initiatives and especially for promoting this Charta in Austria.

I am honored to sign the Diversity Charta today and I am positive that it will be a success story in Austria and in Europe in the years to come.

I wish you all a great event and enjoy your stay in Vienna!

Thank you for your attention!