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Position Paper from Cittaslow Germany on current issues, Coordinator Manfred Dörr

Today we live in troubled times. While the big politics in the globalized world deals with wars, armament, expulsion, trade conflicts and many threat scenarios, the people on the spot deal with topics like climate change, extinction of species, digitalization, artificial intelligence or also social injustices with dramatic consequences like flight and migration, diseases, isolation, lack of perspective.

Many of the issues or problems have been known for a long time, but in climate protection, for example, the protest of the younger generation was needed in order to make people fully aware of the significance of climate change in politics and society.

In view of this situation, what must be done not to gamble away the future of our planet?

It would be important for great politics to consistently stand up for peace and freedom, to end wars and armament, and to create reasonable livelihoods for the people. Only in peace and freedom can people and societies develop and unfold.

The aim, above all for local authorities and cities, must be to secure and improve the quality of life of their citizens. This requires a rethink in many areas of life and numerous changes in behaviour and lifestyle.

Climate and species protection, the preservation of our livelihoods, the preservation of creation, the responsible use of digital media and artificial intelligence, which must serve people and must not become independent, can only be achieved if people, at the base in their cities and communities, are actively committed to it.

As part of its Agenda 2030, the United Nations has developed 17 sustainability goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and expressed its conviction that economic development must be shaped in accordance with social justice and within the framework of ecological limits.

Unfortunately, in the past a primacy of the economy has arisen, to which everything else has been subordinated. This was very disadvantageous for the ecological as well as the social side. In the future, the economy must be transformed from a pure end into a means that serves society and helps to make good life possible for all people. Given the exploitation of resources, it should be clear to everyone that economic growth cannot be infinite.

Agenda 2030 applies to all countries of the world and everyone should make a contribution to its implementation. Due to their local roots and the concrete implementation orientation on the ground, the municipalities are virtually predestined for this. As a rule, citizens identify strongly with their municipality if the framework conditions are right. Here they feel at home, here they experience community and here they can play an active part in shaping their world.



We now all know that there must be strict rules for environmental protection quickly if we are to achieve climate rescue. Decisions are urgently needed, but must be carefully thought through. Actionism would be fatal here.

Therefore, objectives must not be defined from top to bottom, but as a result of interaction between actors.

Happiness and quality of life cannot be determined by gross national product. It is not about more and more, faster and faster, further and further, higher and higher, but rather about decelerating life, about thorough reflection and conscious action, about a responsible use of resources, about topics and values such as education, health and social interaction, in short about a fairer and more humane world. Digitalisation and rapid technical progress should be recognised and exploited as opportunities for completely new solutions.

The Cittaslow model, which involves the sustainable development of small towns worth living in according to the three-pillar model of economic efficiency, ecology and social cohesion, can be very helpful in this rethinking process.

We therefore call on governments to work for peace and freedom, to provide basic educational opportunities, to invest more in science and research, to reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and to support and promote more effectively the activities of people in cities and communities.

If we succeed in creating a good and just coexistence, especially with the young generation, and a better quality of life for the people of all generations, there will no longer be a place for racism and populism in societies.