



PRESS RELEASE

Augsburg, 9th of May 2022

EU-President von der Leyen sees Augsburg's Fuggerei as a model to rebuild Ukraine

EU Commission President makes proposal for new Ukraine partnership / Fuggerei could serve as a model to rebuild Ukraine / Von der Leyen plans to talk with President Selenskyi about the proposal / Festival weeks in honor of 500 years social settlement started

EU Commission President **von der Leyen** visited Augsburg on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Fuggerei and sees the social settlement as a model and inspiration for the reconstruction of Ukraine. She called the world's oldest social settlement a "great success story" that should be carried into the future and can serve as a European role model. Von der Leyen announced to talk about her Augsburg visit and possible cooperation in her next phone call with the Ukrainian President Selenskyi.

Von der Leyen shared the idea in her keynote address in front of 450 guests in the Golden Hall of Augsburg City Hall. Earlier, she joined Minister President Markus Söder, Lord Mayor Eva Müller and representatives of the Fugger family in opening the official festive program for the 500th anniversary of the Fuggerei.

The Commission President paid tribute to the visionary power, level of responsibility and courage of Augsburg's citizens and the Fugger family, who laid the foundation stone for the globally unique settlement half a millennium ago. *"The 500 year old Fuggerei would not exist without the foresight, the will and the creative spirit of the Fuggers. These buildings are entrepreneurial success cast in stone, but even more so, they are proof of entrepreneurial responsibility. They represent social balance,"* said von der Leyen.

Fuggerei can serve as a model to rebuild Ukraine

In her Augsburg speech, von der Leyen addressed two key challenges facing Europe, the war in Ukraine and climate change. To tackle these challenges, she sees the need for European determination and firm cohesion, and a willingness to innovate and drive. The Fuggerei, with its long history and principles, is a *"recipe from which Europe can learn"* von der Leyen said.

The Commission President welcomed *"the initiative to implement the Fuggerei idea in various other places"*, as is already being considered in Sierra Leone or Lithuania, for example. These future Fuggereis can learn from the experience of the Augsburg original, but at the same time should be geared to the individual needs of the local population and brought to life by local partners. In her speech, von der Leyen also mentioned the EU Commission's New European Bauhaus initiative and in this context sees the potential for a new and even deeper partnership with Ukraine, in which the Fuggerei can also play a supporting role.

"While fighting continues in Ukraine and struggles to end the violence, we are already planning with the Ukrainian government to rebuild the country. It will take strength to rebuild the bombed-out cities. But there lies also huge opportunities in it," von der Leyen explains. The Fuggerei *"could be an inspiration "* with its sustainable and people-centered approach to rebuilding Ukraine. Von der Leyen made the proposal for a new partnership program between Ukraine and the EU. Regions, cities and professional groups should network to exchange experiences and ideas, and thus cooperate in rebuilding the country. With its concept and approach, the Fuggerei can provide valuable impulses to enable people to live in dignity and self-determination. Von der Leyen said she would report on her Fuggerei visit to Ukrainian President Zelenskyy in a phone call on Sunday. "Europe needs more Fuggerei", the EU Commission president stated.

The Chairman of the Board of the Fugger Foundations, Alexander Erbgraf Fugger-Babenhausen thanked the President of the EU Commission for coming to Augsburg and emphasized, *"We already had a first contact to Ukraine for a social settlement based on the model of the Fuggerei, which unfortunately broke off due to the current situation. We thank you for your support. This has exceeded our expectations."*

A model for the future

In his celebratory speech, Bavarian Minister President **Markus Söder** also emphasized the exemplary role of the 500-year-old social institution and its unique spirit. *"Anyone who is in the Fuggerei feels it. It is not just another residential unit. The Fuggerei is timeless and homey. The people who live there like to be there. They have self-confidence."* Jakob Fugger started something *"visionary and modern"* with the foundation half a millennium ago, he said, and the Fugger family is successfully carrying on this legacy.

"The original in the city of Augsburg, could become a global network of Fuggerei's around the world," said Augsburg's Lord Mayor Eva Weber. The Fuggerei, she said, is model for the future, created in a time when Augsburg was struggling with challenges similar to those of today, pandemic and housing shortage.

Pavilion as the center of the festivities

The central venue of the program festival on Augsburg's Town Hall Square is the "Fuggerei NEXT500 Pavilion". Inside, an exhibition of photographs by Daniel Biskup allows visitors to discover the "Fuggerei code" and the Fuggerei construction kit developed with MVRDV offers inspiration for new Fuggeries of the future around the world. Summits, book readings, workshops and special events will be hosted till June 12, 2022 at the pavilion. Speakers include Felix Neureuther, Neven Subotic, Julian Nida-Rümelin, Wolfgang Ischinger, Franz von Metzler, Sandra Breka, and Darren Walker,

Further information:

- High-resolution images, including pictures of the Fuggerei Anniversary Pavilion, the opening weekend with Ursula von der Leyen, Markus Söder and all other invited guests, are available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2q9mdcq11uo1ifm/AACp3KF-k4uglFAepcfN8ciVa?dl=0> (will be updated regularly).
- The speech of von der Leyen and the other guests of honor can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNa2UAzUQec>
- The complete program can be found here: <https://www.fuggerei-next500.de>

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