



**Online event of the
OstWestWirtschaftsForum Bayern e.V.
Topic: Romania as a business location
on 26 July 2021
Greeting by Mr. Karl Freller, MdL
1st Vice President of the Bavarian State Parliament**

Dear Mr. Sinner
Dear Mr. Pönisch,

Thank you for your invitation. It is an honour for me to be with you today - even if only virtually due to the pandemic.

The OstWestWirtschaftsForum Bayern has been a valuable advisor and an important bridge builder to Bavaria's eastern neighbours in Europe for decades. I look forward to exchanging ideas with you.

A warm greeting to all our Romanian friends here in Bavaria.

Bavaria and Romania - neighbours and friends in the heart of Europe

Bavaria and Romania have a lot in common - and our strong interpersonal ties strengthen our friendship in a united Europe.

Almost 200,000 people of Romanian origin [as of 31.12.2020: 190,012] live in the Free State - even the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis is connected to Bavaria through family.

72 university partnerships bring our young generations together. A showcase project of this cooperation is the "Rumaenicum" at the University of Regensburg. Students of all disciplines train here in Romanian language, culture and regional studies. This intercultural offer is unique in Germany and a flagship of our good relations. This is what cross-border cooperation in a modern Europe looks like.

And that's not all! In the municipal partnerships, our friendship continues to grow through mutual visits and on-site encounters.

Romanian-Bavarian relations have been close and friendly since the fall of the Iron Curtain. We can proudly state together that the growing together of our countries, which once seemed separated by worlds and so foreign, is a great cause for joy.

There are so many who have contributed to this: the Romanian Germans, the emigrants and all the friends of Bavaria in Romania and all the friends of Romania in Bavaria. With their commitment, they have all helped Europe grow together. I am very grateful for that.

But the good relationship between Bavaria and Romania is also thanks to the members of the OstWestWirtschaftsForum Bayern and its predecessor associations. Long before the fall of the Iron Curtain, they were pioneers in building relations between West and East in Europe. For this you deserve recognition and respect!



Economic Partnership between Romania and Bavaria

What has happened in Europe since the fall of the Iron Curtain can also be seen in particular in economic relations between Romania and Bavaria.

- Approximately 1,000 Bavarian companies maintain business relations with Romania;
- over 100 have branches in Romania;
- 16 operate production facilities there, including BMW, Siemens and the automotive supplier Schaeffler from my home region of Central Franconia.

Since Romania joined the EU in 2007, the mutual trade volume has almost doubled. Romania is Bavaria's 17th most important trading partner worldwide.

Our Bavarian-Romanian Government Commission is celebrating its 21st birthday this year. It is a firmly established platform for cooperation.

We in Bavaria are convinced that dialogue and cooperation are the right way forward. And we want to continue on this path.

That is why we are very happy to have a good friend in President Klaus Iohannis. He is one of the most respected statesmen in Europe. Last year, he received the Charlemagne Prize of Aachen for his services to Europe and European unification.

Strong Europe: shared responsibility!

Ladies and Gentlemen

European unification has reconciled enemies after the worst war in human history. Today, more than half a billion Europeans live in peace and freedom. We have opened a new chapter in togetherness - characterised by respect, tolerance and appreciation.

As a cosmopolitan, export-oriented state, Bavaria benefits greatly from the EU. Around every second euro is earned by Bavarian industry abroad, the lion's share in the EU.

Economic strength, secure jobs, crisis management and influence in the community of states can only be achieved with Europe. Only in this way will we be strong and able to act together.

This is not only about our prosperity, but also about our values. I grew up with the values of our Basic Law and the Bavarian Constitution, which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. Freedom of opinion, freedom of the press and freedom of religion, parliamentary democracy, social market economy, separation of powers and the rule of law - all these are part of the DNA of our social order.

We know from our own history and from the newspapers that there are other regimes: without human rights, without the rule of law, but instead with arbitrariness and even terror and war. For us in Europe, this means that in times when the European system of values is under attack, we must stand up for Europe together.

We in Bavaria are convinced Europeans - that is why the European flags that were waved countless times by the people in Bucharest and all over the country are not only a symbol for us. For us, they are also a mission. We will continue on our path of friendship and cooperation with Romania - for the good of Romania, Bavaria and Europe.