

Czech Republic - country in the heart of Europe

Consul General Kristina Larischová visits the OWWF's Maximilianeum round table

In the Maximilianeum round of the East-West Economic Forum Bavaria on May 6th Kristina Larischová was guest of the General Consul. Among the participants was also the Vice President of the Bavarian State Parliament, Markus Rinderspacher, SPD as well as his colleague Hans Friedl from the Free Voters.

In her very courageous and informative lecture, Mrs. Larischová briefly dealt with the long, partly eventful history of the neighbours Bavaria and Bohemia. After the "Velvet Revolution", the Czech Republic was able to regain the economic strength of the country before the Second World War. At that time the degree of industrialisation in the Czech Republic was higher than in Germany. Last but not least, a very good education system contributed and continues to contribute to this.

With a volume of around 20 billion euros, Bavaria contributes a good quarter of the total trade volume between Germany and the Czech Republic. In trade between the two countries, the Czech Republic even achieves a significant export surplus of approx. 13 billion euros - with a total export volume of approx. 46 billion euros to Germany, of which approx. 13 billion euros to Bavaria. By far the largest item (approx. 20%) is the automotive industry, which plays an important role in both economies. Closely related to this sector is the mechanical engineering sector, which accounts for almost the same share of the joint trade volume.

Larischová also points out that the upcoming European elections are eagerly awaited due to the strong export orientation of both countries.

Although the Czech Republic is still not part of the monetary union, its membership in the European Union and access to the European internal market have brought enormous advantages for the country, and have made today's success possible, e.g. steadily falling unemployment figures (currently approx. 1.9%). Nevertheless there is a dissatisfaction, since one compares the own incomes always with the incomes in Bavaria, which amount to approximately the 3-fold. The resulting purchasing power, which would give a completely different picture, is not compared.

Let's look back at history: Bohemia was for a long time the centre of power in Central Europe in the Middle Ages and then became the plaything of larger powers. This results in an uneasiness in the population to be at the mercy of their larger neighbours, especially Germany. The EU's complicated voting system for majority decisions, however, gives even the smaller states disproportionately more weight.

There is therefore opposite the European Union in the country a rather negative basic attitude - apart from classically dissatisfied ones particularly the recent generation on Europe is not to be spoken consistently well - there this generation must actually arrange the future of the federation of states.

In this context, Ms Larischová emphasised the absolute necessity of giving high priority to political education.

Shared successes, shared challenges - yet there are also considerable differences, especially in energy policy. The Czech Republic continues to focus on nuclear energy as allegedly clean and cheap energy, at least as long as the costs and environmental damage of disposal are not really clarified.

OWWF Vice-President Hermann Pönisch thanks Mrs Larischová for her visit. He appeals not only to see Russia or China when looking at Bavaria's eastern trading partners, but also to pay attention to Eastern Europe - after all, Bavarian exports have doubled since the EU's eastward expansion and there is still considerable development potential.