

"Strengthening the Danube Region"

The opportunities are right on our doorstep - let's seize them!

The invasion of Ukraine made it abundantly clear that the German economy must change its business model as quickly as possible. For several years now, it has been clear that the fixation on exports and intensive cooperation with countries ruled by autocracies or dictatorships has led to increasing problems.

A global division of economic labor can only work in the long term if the advantages and disadvantages for each individual country are balanced. Only through cooperation can a win-win situation be created, only in this way can balanced current accounts be achieved.

In his welcoming speech, **President Eberhard Sinner** emphasised the importance of the Danube region, especially for the medium-sized Bavarian economy. After the foreseeable loss of Russia as a trading partner, at least for the near future, and the uncertainty concerning the economic relations with China, it becomes even more important to focus on the regions in the EU and in the neighbourhood, which still offer great opportunities.

Vice President Hermann Pönisch briefly reviewed the previous OWWF Bavaria event "How to go forward - consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine" in Munich. At this event it became clear that Germany needs a reorientation in practically all areas. For Bavaria, our eastern neighbours in the Danube region offer themselves as the area where many opportunities for economic cooperation open up. Regensburg was already a center of European trade at that time in its history due to the construction of the Stone Bridge in the 12th century.

With almost 150 million inhabitants, the Danube region has almost as many inhabitants as Russia. However, the structure is disadvantaged by many relatively small countries with different languages and administrative regulations. This is another reason why it is important to strengthen the EU in this region in particular, in order to create uniform rules for unhindered exchange.

With two presentations about countries at the lower Danube the existing possibilities will be worked out.

Jürgen Raizner from the Steinbeis Transfer Center is helping to facilitate investments and cooperations for Southern German companies in Romania. With a population of 35 million, the country offers an interesting market. Education is traditionally good, and there are still many opportunities, especially in smaller towns. The infrastructure is being rapidly expanded with the help of the EU.

Consul Stefan Ionkov tried to point out the advantages of Bulgaria. Since the collapse of the communist regime, Bulgaria has lost over two million inhabitants, especially well-educated young people. The recently elected government, headed by two energetic politicians who studied in the U.S., has made it a priority to fight the still rampant corruption. In addition, the government is investing heavily in infrastructure, also to help impoverished regions that were once strong regain their former prosperity. Many exiles are just waiting to return to their home country if they have the right opportunities there.

[Presentation Bulgaria](#)

In her welcoming address, **Mayor Maltz-Schwarzfischer** referred to Regensburg's importance as a major trading center in the Middle Ages. Today, Regensburg is a prospering economic area, not least due to the Danube port, and again an important node between the Rhine, Main and Danube.

The Danube as a traffic artery then became the focus of attention. In order to strengthen its importance, particular reference was made to the need to develop transition points accordingly for trimodal traffic.

President Herfried Leitner, ProDanube International introduced these first: "We are convinced that the potential of the Danube waterway as a competitive logistics system is far greater than we use it today. Tapping this potential is our vision. This applies to both passenger and freight transport." Essential to this is profitability in the inland waterway transport sector, factors for which still have much room for improvement on the Danube.

The last five years have been characterised by extreme low water, effects of the Corona epidemic on passenger navigation, lack of maintenance work and, most recently, the war in Ukraine.

The comprehensive ProDanube International presentation lists the prerequisites for an efficient Danube:

- intact infrastructure (navigability)
- terminals, ports and transshipment sites must be available on demand or 24/7
- Cost transparency for the modes of transport
- Inland navigation must break away from dependence on bulk cargoes
- EU political support for the shipping fund

[Presentation of ProDanube International](#)

Prof. Thomas Schlipkoether, COO + CTO Duisport showed the potentials of the Danube region in cooperation with the Rhine-Main based on the development of the largest European inland port Duisburg. Due to the collapse of the coal and steel industry, the port got into great difficulties and ultimately had to "reinvent itself". Today, Duisburg is a profitable port with an annual cargo throughput of 111 million tons (2021) thanks to its development into a trimodal transport hub. Duisport is also represented at many other ports or acts in an advisory capacity for the expansion of transport hubs.

[You can get an overview in the Duisport presentation](#)

Harald Leupold, HL Consulting, member of the board of OWWF Bavaria and former CEO of Bayernhafen Nürnberg-Roth concluded by presenting the importance of the Bavarian Danube cities. Due to the problem of the Straubing - Vilshofen route, which has not been upgraded, and the associated unpredictability of promises regarding the punctuality of deliveries, transport performance in the Bavarian ports has been steadily declining in recent years.

Alexander Krempf, Asseco Solution, an IT company in the field of ERP demonstrated the possibilities and importance of using AI in logistics. In all areas from warehousing, order processing to transportation, AI enables faster and more cost-effective processing of logistics services.

[Read the ASSECO presentation here](#)

Mag. Franz Nauschnigg, former Director of the Austrian Central Bank, emphasised the relevance of a united European Union and a strong euro. The development of infrastructure requires powerful instruments that open up financing outside budgetary and national constraints and ensure that infrastructure remains in European hands. EU funds from the EU Construction and Resilience Facility could be used for this purpose, and national instruments along the lines of the Austrian ASFINAG model could be used.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_de

Instead of an energy embargo, a tariff on energy from Russia would be a more effective sanction and could generate additional funds for EU. Read more here:

<https://socialeurope.eu/what-to-do-with-russian-oil-and-gas>

Mario Holzner, Gf. Director, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, spoke about necessary measures to strengthen the Danube region. As a counter design to the Chinese "One Belt - One Road" the "European Silk Road" has to be conceived. The European countries must finally understand that only together, and thus as the strongest economic bloc, they can form a counterweight to the emerging world power China. Against this background, national solo efforts are out of the question.

Dr. Ernst Schmied, Jürgen Raizner and Prof. Dr. Klaus Schmidt, Saarland University, head of AKJ Automotive and the Institute for Production and Logistics Systems gave an outlook on the DanubeMacroRegionBusinessWeek22 conference planned for the end of June in Romania with events in Giurgiu, Constanta and Craiova. The concrete program focuses on the organization of supply chains in the automotive industry and is still being worked out.

<https://www.dmrbw.net>

The development of the European Danube macro-region into a Tech Valley as an ecological logistics model for networking road, rail, waterway, use of artificial intelligence and robust resilience against global supply chain shocks is a priority. Crystallization points are the ports as trimodal logistics centers from Rotterdam to Constanza with a development and connection of high-value crisis-proof jobs to this "European Silk Road", opening perspectives further east beyond the Black Sea. After Corona and Russia's war against Ukraine, a challenge for the 14 countries of the EU MacroRegion Danube, chaired this year by Ukraine.

<https://www.ukrinform.de/rubric-polytics/3340189-die-ukraine-wird-2022-eustrategie-fur-donauraum-leiten.html>

The Studio Niederbayern/Oberpfalz of the Bayerischer Rundfunk reported about this event:

<https://www.br.de/nachrichten/wirtschaft/wirtschaftsforum-will-den-donauraum-staerken,T4iYmkf>