

## Has the EU become a German Union?

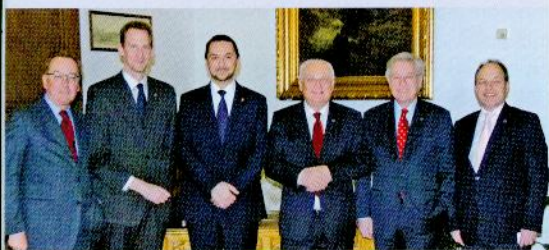
Students and pupils from Budweis were invited to discuss European issues with high-profile speakers at the Café d' Europe Régional by the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE). This event has been organized by the IRE in cooperation with the South Bohemian Region, a member of the IRE network, the European Commission in Prague as well as the Austrian Foreign Ministry. More than 80 young people followed the invitation on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2013.



Filip Černý, Alina Fistioc, Jiří Zimola, Franz Schausberger, Klara Rundová, Ferdinand Trauttmansdorff, Martin Meischl, Ivan Kafka (Energie AG Bohemia)



President Jiří Zimola with Simone Brunner, Wirtschaftsblatt.



Meeting with the City of Budweis: Wolfgang Friess, Joachim Fritz, Mayor Juraj Thoma, Franz Schausberger, Bernd Petrisch and Karl Edtstadler

IRE Chairman **Franz Schausberger** said that Germany cannot predetermine conditions, as the Union always tries to achieve mutual agreements. According to the EU Treaties, all 27 member states have the same rights and are represented in the EU by their Commissioners. The economic strength of the member states plays a role but as more competencies are given away from the national to the supranational level of the EU, a counterbalance is needed. **Schausberger** sees the counterbalance in strong European cities and regions. The relaxed atmosphere of the Café gave the students the opportunity to talk to IRE chairman **Franz Schausberger**, president of the South Bohemian Region **Jiří Zimola**, the Austrian ambassador to the Czech Republic, **Ferdinand Trauttmansdorff**, the representative of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, **Martin Meischl**, as well as **Klara Rundová** from the representation of the European Commission in Prague. **Alina Fistioc**, a student from the University of South Bohemia was also invited to share her thoughts on Europe at the podium. President **Zimola** praised the IRE's initiative and the fruitful cooperation between South Bohemia and the institute. Moreover, he reported on the INTERREG project with the Free State of Bavaria, Upper Austria, Lower Aus-

tria, the regions Plzeň and Vysočina by which the regions profit from the exchange of experience and information. Mrs. **Rundová**, from the political office of the Commission in Prague, explained that the representation of the Commission is an informative institution for the EU citizens and brings the EU closer to the people.

Young students also criticized the lack of interest of Western Europeans for the new EU member states. Ambassador Trauttmansdorff replied that paradoxically the geographical closeness parts. He is convinced that the freedom of movement will result in counteracting this problem and that an improvement of the European traffic connection will automatically enhance the situation. Schausberger motivated the audience to take part in EU programmes such as Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci, to go abroad and convince other Europeans of their culture, heritage and country. The IRE started cooperating with the University of South Bohemia by welcoming two students for an internship at the institute in Salzburg. The Trade Commissioner Mr. **Meischl** underlined the importance of language ability, particularly in cross-border regions. It makes investments and finding workplaces easier. Austria's trade volume with the

Kindly supported by:





Czech Republic tripled in the last 9 years. The EU should aim at intensifying the cooperation with new regions and non-

EU countries in Europe. Bringing Europe closer guarantees coherence and stability, said **Schausberger**.

