

## **Cooperation opportunities between Weihai and Austria, to promote the internationalization of Weihai**

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The Austrian-Chinese Business Association (ACBA) was established in 2010 in Vienna, Austria. The Association aims to promote economic and trade exchanges between Chinese and European entrepreneurs, offers consultancy services for small and medium-sized companies, who are interested in investing in Europe and/or developing trade relations in China and Europe, and strives to establish cooperative partnerships between Austrian and Chinese universities. As president of ACBA I will, in this report, give suggestions on the internationalization of Weihai City regarding the following aspects:

### **I. Cultural and Educational Aspect**

First and foremost there is the cultural exchange, which makes it possible to understand each other on a common ground. Weihai has made big efforts to invest in artistic education. Austria can contribute to this by bringing experience, cultural education systems and above all the excellent music to Weihai.

Culture and especially musical education is of particular importance in Austria. The capitol city of Vienna is characterized by a large number of concert halls, museums and other cultural projects. The Austrian music

scene, the variety of education facilities and, of course, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra are proof of this. I am convinced that valuable contacts can be established between Austria/Vienna and the cultural officers in Weihai following this conference – especially as there is a need for more contact and exchange in the educational sector.

Weihai is generally excellent in education. Austria can learn from it. For this purpose, I am thinking of a cooperation of our high schools, universities and colleges, for example in the form of a student exchange program, thus, laying the groundwork for working together on a broader range of different projects in this sector. One specialty of the Austrian and the German educational system, the dual learning system, which is a practically oriented combination of both theoretical knowledge and work experience, could also be of interest to Weihai. Graduate students from both countries will help forming the basis of mutual cultural understanding, which will lead to even better performances in the work process.

I strongly believe, that the Belt and Road Initiative needs to connect China and the West also in regard to the different cultures, thus allowing us to move forward on the basis of mutual understanding.

## II. Economic Aspect

In regard to its economic role, Weihai is characterized by its geographic location as a port city. Cargo can be sent by ship to Europe at low cost and then transported by rail to Austria and other European countries. Let me now give you an overview of the many opportunities for economic

cooperation between Weihai and Austria:

Austria's main imports from China include electronic devices (especially smartphones, data-processing equipment, hand tools, electric motors), clothing (especially ski suits), and medical instruments. Recently the import of more complex consumer goods has become more frequent.

The most important Austrian exports to China include machinery, electrical generators, measuring instruments, medical technology, pharmaceutical products and plastic products. There has been an increase in the export of iron and steel, centrifuges, food and whey products.

We are able to contribute to this through the rising confidence of Austrian companies in the Chinese market and its strategic importance. Chinese trends in innovation and technology lead to new opportunities that make room for new business areas, for example in the field of e-mobility, artificial intelligence, smart factories, start-ups, fintech, nanotechnology, space travel and aviation.

Also, China will host the 2022 Winter Olympics. This event opens up a variety of opportunities for cooperation, especially in the field of ski and snowboard production, development of winter sport resorts and related service industries, as well as smart cities and accessibility modules for different sectors as in particular ski lifts.

We can also promote Weihai as a production base for winter sport equipment, skis and ski garment materials for Austrian companies.

Together let us establish an economic and industrial park where Austrian companies can settle in order to realize joint economic projects on site.

In this context, I would like to mention a new Russian project, that goal it is to create a free trade zone between the cities of Vladivostok, Harbin and Dalian. This “green corridor” could very well include Weihai. My law firm was invited to give legal advice on the project. In my opinion, there are many opportunities to actively participate in this project especially for Weihai, who already has a very active trade with the Liaoning region.

From April 7 to April 13, 2018, the most significant Austrian state visit to date was held by Federal President Van der Bellen and Federal Chancellor Kurz. The government members were accompanied by a large business delegation consisting of more than one hundred members. As representatives of the Austrian-Chinese Business Association, my colleague and I were also part of the delegation.

A new era in the relations between Austria and China has begun. As President Xi Jinping has said, both countries can now seize the opportunity to establish a friendly strategic partnership.

Following this high profile visit, we are now in the process of implementing several specific projects. It will be our great pleasure to use this platform for the advantage of Weihai. We will give our very best to realize some practical benefits for your city.

### III. Legal Aspect

Especially as a commercial lawyer, I can help to accompany and advise the necessary contracts to guarantee optimal success. After China has adopted very similar laws in many areas, notably *IPR*, specifically in *Copyright Law*, *Trademark Law* and *Patent Law*, a cooperation has become easier in every direction. We can work together on standards that make it easier to certify. Austria is also the gateway to the EU, therefore able to help Weihai with the admission of goods and services.

In summary, Weihai's internationalization cannot be confined to its economic aspects alone, but has to be considered holistically, from a variety of different perspectives. I believe that together we have a very good foundation to work even closer in the future and to consolidate our relationship not only on the economic level but also on the level of friendship. We can take a big step forward and I can contribute well to Weihai's internationalization.