

PROTOCOL
of the Fourteenth Session of the Joint Committee on Economic Cooperation
between the Czech Republic and the Republic of Serbia
Belgrade, 20th and 21st April, 2023

The Fourteenth Session of the Joint Committee on Economic Cooperation between the Czech Republic and the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: the "Committee") was held from 20th to 21st April, 2023 in Belgrade.

The meeting of the Committee was held in accordance with Article No. 4 of the bilateral Agreement on Economic Cooperation between the Government of the Czech Republic and the Council of Ministers of Serbia and Montenegro, signed in Prague on 20th July, 2005.

The delegation of the Czech Republic was led by Mr. Edvard Kožušník, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade. The delegation of the Republic of Serbia was led by Mr. Stevan Nikčević, State Secretary in the Ministry of Internal and Foreign Trade.

Lists of delegations are attached in Annexes I and II to this Protocol.

Delegations worked in three working groups: I Economic Cooperation including Transport; II Energy and Mining; III Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

All meetings were held in a cordial and friendly atmosphere reflecting the desire to find practical, feasible and effective ways and means that would expand cooperation in line with potentials of both countries.

During the session both delegations emphasized that further strengthening of bilateral cooperation is a joint objective of the Czech and the Serbian Government. It is a recommendation of the Committee that the working group meetings should also be held in the period between the sessions of the Committee, according to specific needs, or to resolve individual issues and discuss the projects of mutual cooperation, based on the current requirements and drafts prepared in the meantime.

Both sides pointed out the necessity to further enhance mutual economic ties and promote investment and trade through intensified bilateral dialogue on economic issues of regional and global importance, especially within the EU context.

Cooperation in the fields of the specific cooperation segments

Cooperation in the field of Bilateral Trade and Investments

Bilateral relations were mutually evaluated as very good. Both sides exchanged information on results of foreign trade in 2022 (see Annex III) and discussed the possibilities to increase the trade turnover.

Both sides welcomed positive trade trends and growing Czech investments in the Republic of Serbia.

The Serbian side expressed its readiness to continue supporting Czech investors in the realization of their business intentions, both in the process of realizing investment projects and in protecting the acquired rights of investors, bearing in mind a stable business environment, with a recognizable and attractive investment environment.

The Serbian side invited Czech investors to participate in the privatization process.

Cooperation in the field of Small and Medium Enterprises

Both sides agreed that the SME sector is the one of the most important sectors which is in direct correlation with economic development in each country. Future cooperation in this field between both countries is very important especially through exchange of experience and best practice in the implementation of EU funded projects, technology transfer, innovation, greening and digitalization and regional cooperation

Cooperation in the field of Standardization, Metrology, Testing and Conformity Assessment

Both sides confirmed their intense interest in continuing to develop further cooperation within and outside the scope of concluded Memorandum of Understanding, capitalizing on the knowledge, experience and professional and personal relations gained in cooperation in the preceding years and depending on available financial resources. Both sides expect to continue cooperation in the future and expressed their interest in continuation of usage of the Aid for Trade of the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic.

Cooperation in the field of Transport

The Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia reiterates its position concerning the liberalization of the transport of goods which should be included in the new Agreement on Road Transport. Having in mind the above mentioned, both sides should make efforts to finalize the process of the harmonization of the new Road Transport Agreement before the next Serbian-Czech Joint Committee Meeting on International Road Transport which is planned to be held in 2023. The Joint Commission for International Road Transport is exclusively competent in this matter. The Serbian side proposed to organize Joint Committee Meeting of the International Road Transport in third quarter of 2023 in Belgrade. The date will be confirmed in direct communication between the Road transport department of the Ministry of Transport of the Czech Republic and Road transport, Roads and Traffic Safety Department of the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia.

The Czech side invites delegation of Serbian Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport on the 2023 PIARC World Road Congress on road infrastructure and related issues in Prague, October 2023. The Serbian side expects the official invitation letter to the events.

The Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia is interested in cooperation with the Czech experts in railway regarding construction and maintenance of high-speed railway lines, but also regarding implementation of new technologies and innovations in railway traffic.

The Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia is interested in cooperation with the Czech companies from railway sector regarding their involvement in ongoing and planned railway infrastructure projects.

The Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia is interested in exchange of experience between railway experts from both countries in order to make contacts for future activities and use best examples of practice.

The Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia is especially interested in exchange of experts for intermodal transport from both countries, having in mind that combined transport represents the future of transport system.

Regarding the presentation of the network of new generation of fully automatic stations for the control of weighting of freight vehicles by the Czech company TENZOVÁHY, Serbian side informed that the Czech companies would be informed, based on information obtained from the Serbian side, through the competent Ministry of the Czech Republic about future tenders in the transport area in order to participate in the public procurement procedure.

Cooperation in the field of Finance

Both sides agreed to coordinate and exchange expertise within the Technical Cooperation Project of the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic in the field of public finance, with a special focus on European integration.

Cooperation in the field of Tourism

Both Sides appreciate the collaboration in the field of tourism between the Republic of Serbia and the Czech Republic, especially their common efforts within the framework of international organizations and regional cooperation such as the UNWTO. Both Sides welcome the exchange of information and experience in this field.

Cooperation in the field of Energy and Mining

Czech companies engaged in pit mining of raw materials (Ostroj Opava, BPO, T-Machinery, Hansen, RPS Ostrava, Enelex and Czech Extraction and Mining Technology - Association) express their interest in participating in investment programs of mining development, modernization and increasing of the safety of pit mines of the company JP PEU Resavica.

Czech company VODNI ZDROJE, a.s. offers know-how in the disposal of old environmental burdens (remediations), mine water management, sludge stabilization, hydrogeology support of mining areas, restoration of the hydrogeological regime in the context of mine reclamation.

The Czech side has generally expressed interest in investing in the energy sector of the Republic of Serbia.

The Serbian side is interested in cooperation regarding the energy transition, coal decarbonization, as well as the adoption of good practices in the exploitation and use of coal. Also, it is interested in exchanging experiences regarding the development of the model of closing mines in underground exploitation that are faced with depletion of reserves and where there is no justification for further exploitation, as well as considering of the possibility of improving and modernizing the work in mines with underground coal exploitation that have sufficient quantities and quality of balance reserves.

There is also an interest to establish cooperation in terms of exchange of experiences in connection with the development of strategic documents as well as technical regulations in the field of mining and geology.

Cooperation in the field of Environmental Protection

Serbia is a long-term partner for the Czech Ministry of the Environment with number of bilateral projects already implemented.

The Czech institutions and companies are interested in the implementation of environmental projects in the Republic of Serbia, and in this regard, Czech companies express interest to take part especially in tenders for water and sewage treatment projects in the Republic of Serbia. The Czech business sector can offer a wide range of new environmental technologies and know-how. Serbian side is interested in receiving this type of assistance in the field of waste management as well.

The Serbian side would like to continue cooperation with the Czech companies, producers of technological parts for wastewater treatment plants and water supplies systems.

Serbian side is interested in receiving assistance in the field of waste management as well, proposing the following potential areas of cooperation with the Czech Republic:

- Transfer of experience in the use of EU structural funds in the field of environmental protection;
- Cooperation within the defined pillars of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans from the area of competence of our ministry.

The Serbian side asked the Czech side to continue cooperation on nature protection framework. Possible further cooperation would be based on transfer of knowledge and experience on implementing EU nature directives (for example Habitats and Birds Directives – Natura 2000, Directive on Invasive Alien Species Regulation, creation of biodiversity monitoring database, Wildlife Trade Regulation, Regulation on compliance measures for users from the Nagoya Protocol).

Czech company ELKOPLAST CZ, s.r.o. and its office ELKOPLAST WEST BALKANS DOO BEOGRAD is interest in broadening its cooperation with Serbian authorities mainly in the area of waste management.

Czech company PROVOD has realized eight projects in cooperation with the Serbian Ministry for Environmental Protection and UNDP (Donji Milanovac, Ražanj, Bač, Dimitrovgrad, Vlasotince) and expressed interest to participate in the further projects realization supported by Serbian Ministry for Environmental Protection, including the delivery of equipment. Czech company PROVOD expressed also interest for forthcoming public tender of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Serbia concerning WWTP Lajkovac and would welcome information regarding timing of future steps. It was highly involved in the preparation of the complete project documentation and is in the last phase of negotiations with the CRBC company. PROVOD is also interested in the next phase of 8 projects prepared with its participation during last 3 years, the next stage could include financing by ČEB.

Czech company VHS Brno is present in Republic of Serbia since 2003 (most projects have been realized in Valjevo, Osečina, Ljubovija, Bela Crkva, in the area of the waste water management). Company expressed interest to continue the construction of the WWTP in Bela Crkva, including the continuation of activities related to conceptual design project until the construction permit is obtained. The company is also interested to build a small waste water biological treatment plant in Češko Selo.

Cooperation in the field of water management

The Czech side remains ready to cooperate with Serbian partners in the area of water management. The water management is a shared responsibility of the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture in the Czech Republic.

Further cooperation between both sides could focus on:

- Transferring the Czech experiences related to the state of water management in the Czech Republic in accordance with the activities related to the negotiation process for water sector, transfer and implementation of the EU water framework directives and related legal act, as well as protection against the harmful effects of water (flood directive), institutional organization, financing mechanism and preparation of flood risk management plans.
- Preparation of the cadastre of emissions, discharges and losses in accordance with article 5 of Directive 2008/105 on environmental quality standards and the implementation of monitoring of priority and priority hazardous substances in surface waters through the engagement of a Czech expert;
- Implementation of groundwater quality monitoring in order to determine the limit values of pollutants in groundwater and pollution indicators in accordance with the requirements of Directive 2006/118 on the protection of groundwater from pollution;
- Providing assistance to local governments in the preparation of the necessary technical documentation, wastewater collection and treatment;
- Determination of the cooperation program for the next period.

Czech company VODNI ZDROJE, a.s. offers know-how transfer in the areas of watersupply management. The result of our research and development project is a non-destructive rapid geophysical inspection of dams. Maintenance of watersupply and dams, prevention of accidents and remediation of Bački kanal. The Project documentation for the restoration of temporary waste deposit of Petrohemija Pančevo is prepared and they expressed interest for further implementation of the project.

Cooperation in the field of Agriculture

Cooperation in veterinary field:

The cooperation between the two competent authorities is proceeding without obstacles; Veterinary Directorate of Serbia is pleased to cooperate in the field of implementing EU regulations in the area of food safety and exchange of experiences regarding African swine fever (ASF).

At present, the two competent authorities are in the process of updating the veterinary certificate allowing the export of pork products to Serbia in connection with the occurrence of ASF in the Czech Republic.

Cooperation in phytosanitary field:

Serbian and Czech sides have agreed that there is an interest in continuing cooperation in the sense of exchanging DUS tests, continuation of cooperation and exchange of experience between the phytosanitary inspections of both countries, as well as transfer of Czech experiences in the matter of:

- Genetically modified organisms (GMOs);
- Food safety - risk assessment in the food chain – structure and function, procedure for preparation of scientific opinion, effective assessment and communication of risk along the agri-food chain, coordination of communication activities related to public health and food safety risks, business organisations;
- Application of official controls at border crossings and in the country itself.

Both sides expressed their satisfaction that in March 2023 the TAIEX workshop focused on fruit tree propagation material was successfully implemented in cooperation with the Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture, Brno. Serbian and Czech sides have agreed to continue the cooperation in the field of plant genetic resources between the plant genes banks of both countries.

Cooperation in the business field:

Both sides expressed their satisfaction over the fact that in May 2022 the Czech Republic participated on the 89th International Agricultural Fair in Novi Sad with an official representation stand. On the area of almost 176m² eighteen Czech companies from the field of agriculture, food processing and agricultural machinery and technology presented their products. In September 2021, the Czech Republic participated in the fair as a Partner Country. Czech companies will be represented at the stand of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic at this year's fair also.



From February 2016 an agricultural counsellor operates at the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Belgrade helping Czech and Serbian companies to establish mutual cooperation and trade relations. Since the last Joint Committee meeting in September 2021, the agricultural counsellor organized a series of events aimed at promoting bilateral trade in the area of forestry (April 2022), cattle breeding (August and October 2022) and brewing industry (April 2023).

Date and Venue of the Next Session of the Joint Committee / Closing Remarks

The Fourteenth Session of the Joint Committee was held in a cordial and friendly atmosphere of mutual understanding and constructive dialogue which characterizes the traditional cooperation between the Czech Republic and the Republic of Serbia.

Next Session of the Joint Committee will take place in Prague in 2024, at a date to be agreed upon through diplomatic channels.

This Protocol was prepared and signed in two copies, both in English language, in Belgrade, on 21st April 2023.

<p>On behalf of the Czech Republic</p>  <p>Mr. Edvard Kožušník Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade</p>	<p>On behalf of the Republic of Serbia</p>  <p>Mr. Stevan Nikčević State Secretary in the Ministry of Internal and Foreign Trade</p>
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Czech Delegation

Head of the delegation:

Mr. Edvard Kožušnik, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade (MIT), Co-chairman of the Joint Committee

Members of the delegation:

1. H.E. Tomáš Kuchta, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Serbia,
2. Mr. Miroslav Čančík, Head of the Economic Section, Embassy of the Czech Republic,
3. Mr. Martin Pospíšil, Director of the Department of European Countries, MIT,
4. Mr. Michal Pastvinský, Director of the International Cooperation Department, Ministry for Environmental Protection
5. Mr. Miroslav Chloupek, Director of External Relations and Economy Section, Czech Office for Standards, Metrology and Testing,
6. Mr. Luboš Joza, Deputy Director of the Department of European Countries, MIT
7. Ms. Hana Rambousková, Head of Unit of International Energy Cooperation Unit, MIT
8. Mr. Vladimír Váňa, Agricultural Diplomat, Embassy of the Czech Republic,
9. Ms. Petra Andélová, State Raw material Policy department, MIT
10. Mr. Adis Šaranović, International and EU Affairs Department, Ministry of Transport
11. Mr. Martin Šmejc, Czech Trade representative,
12. Ms. Gordana Atanasovski, Embassy of the Czech Republic,
13. Ms. Gorana Babić, Embassy of the Czech Republic,

Czech Companies

Mr. René Šigut, AŽD:
Ms. Olgica Obradović, AŽD
Mr. Tomáš Hájek, GIS GEOINDUSTRY
Mr. Jovan Mitrović, PROVOD
Mr. Teodosija Krstić, PROVOD
Mr. Jiří Čermák, TENZOVÁHY
Mr. Zdeněk Formánek, Vodní Zdroje
Mr. Vlastimil Janos, VHS Moravia

Serbian delegation

Head of the delegation:

Mr. Stevan Nikčević, State Secretary in the Ministry of Internal and Foreign Trade, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee

Members of the delegation:

1. Mr. Vladimir Džamić, State Secretary in the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure,
2. Mr. Ivan Janković, Acting Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Mining and Energy,
3. Mrs. Verica Ignjatović, Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Finance,
4. Mr. Miloš Radosavljević, Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure,
5. Mrs. Sanja Amanović, Head of Department in the Ministry of Finance,
6. Mrs. Radica Vučković, Head of Department in the Ministry of Environmental Protection,
7. Mrs. Maja Vranić, Head of Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
8. Mr. Damir Ledenčan, Head of Division in the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure,
9. Mr. Nikola Mirković, Head of Division in the Ministry of Economy,
10. Mrs. Nina Mihajlović, Head of Department in the Ministry of Economy,
11. Mrs. Ivana Davidović, Head of Unit in the Ministry of European Integration,
12. Mr. Nemanja Sarač, Head of Unit in the Ministry of Tourism and Youth,
13. Mrs. Milana Arlov Sekulić, Head of Unit in the Ministry of Internal and Foreign Trade,
14. Ms. Dragana Puzić, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Economy,
15. Mrs. Tatjana Radukić, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Mining and Energy,
16. Mrs. Dragana Jelisavac Erdeljan, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Mining and Energy,
17. Mrs. Marija Rolović, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Mining and Energy,
18. Mrs. Maja Nikolić, Representative of the Veterinary Directorate,
19. Mr. Boban Đurić, Representative of the Veterinary Directorate,
20. Mr. Branislav Marković, Representative of the Veterinary Directorate,
21. Mr. Gligorije Veselinović, Advisor in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and water Management,
22. Mr. Petar Simić, Advisor in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and water Management,
23. Mrs. Jelena Tošić, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Tourism and Youth,
24. Mrs. Biljana Filipović Đušić, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Environmental Protection,
25. Mrs. Biljana Mladenović, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Internal and Foreign Trade,
26. Mrs. Tijana Didanović, Associate in the Ministry of European Integration,
27. Mr. Bojan Pajović, Advisor for Investment in the Development Agency of Serbia,
28. Mrs. Marija Sepi, Head of the Department for Europe, Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Bilateral trade in 2022 and 2023- 2 months

According to the data of the Czech side (Czech Statistical Office) overall trade exchange between two countries in 2022 amounted to 1,735 bil. EUR (increase of 156,1 mil. EUR, i.e. by 9,8% compared to the year 2021). In the year 2022 the Czech exports to the Republic of Serbia amounted to 835,8 mil. EUR (increase of 4,3%), while Czech imports from the Republic of Serbia reached value of 900 mil. EUR (increase of 15,6%).

Preliminary Czech data show that in the period January-February of 2023 overall trade between our two countries amounted to 308,7 mil. EUR, in which Czech exports to the Republic of Serbia amounted to 147,1 mil. EUR (increase of 16,0% in comparison to the same period of the previous year), while Czech imports from the Republic of Serbia reached value of 161,5 mil. EUR (increase of 19,1%).

According to the data of the Serbian side (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia) overall trade exchange between two countries in 2022 amounted to 1675,6 mil. EUR (increase of 18,5% compared to the year 2021). In the year 2022 the Serbian exports to the Czech Republic amounted to 856,4 mil. EUR (increase of 14,4%), while Serbian imports from the Czech Republic reached value of 819,2 mil. EUR (increase of 23,2%).

Preliminary Serbian data show that in the period January-February of 2023 overall trade between our two countries amounted to 285.4 mil. EUR, in which Serbian exports to the Czech Republic amounted to 152,8 mil. EUR (increase of 26,5% in comparison to the same period of the previous year), while Serbian imports from the Czech Republic reached value of 132,6 mil. EUR (increase of 12,9%).