



PRESS RELEASE

EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton at VSE

Prague, May 5, 2009

On 5th May, 2009, Commissioner Catherine Ashton was a guest speaker at a conference entitled "Trade policy and SMEs, on a road to recovery" at the University of Economics in Prague.

The conference was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and Trade and Czech Trade Agency as a part of the 1st European SME week. The first European SME Week, taking place from 6 to 14 May 2009, is a campaign to promote entrepreneurship across Europe and to inform entrepreneurs about support available for them at European, national and local level. It allows SMEs to discover an array of information, advice, support and ideas to help them develop their activities.

The welcome speech of the conference was referred by the president of VSE prof. Ing. Richard Hindls, CSc. He mentioned that the University of Economics, Prague considers the organization of the conference as its contribution to the Czech EU Presidency.

Commissioner Catherine Ashton talked about the importance of trade being a critical part of any solution to the economic crisis. Trying to avoid protectionism and at the same time trying to support SMEs is a fundamental heart of tackling the economic crisis. According to Ashton, trade policy is critical to getting the economy out of recession, as is innovation, which can bring many benefits in a world without barriers. One way to find a solution to the crisis is for SMEs to work with large companies and get help and support from the EU. The conference also stressed the importance of the voice of SMEs being heard at both an EU and national level. In addition, knowing where the markets are is essential. Ashton stressed the importance of co-operation between China and the EU in terms of promoting trade.

Mr. Martin Tlapa, Vice-Minister for Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, focused his presentation on the importance of free trade especially in the difficult period when the EU member countries are struggling with a worldwide economic crisis.

During this occasion, Commissioner Ashton was awarded an honorary medal of the University of Economics in Prague.



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The University of Economics, Prague (VSE) is the largest economic university in the Czech Republic. Nowadays, over 18 thousand students study at the 6 faculties here. These are: the Faculty of Finance and Accounting, the Faculty of International Relations, the Faculty of Business Administration, the Faculty of Informatics and Statistics, the Faculty of Economics and Public Administration, and the Faculty of Management in Jindřichův Hradec. Graduates of the UEP occupy important functions in the private, as well as public sectors. Most of them go to different branches of industry and services, business, marketing, banking, public management, accounting, auditing, tourist trade, and to the field of information technologies. The UEP's honorable title of "doctor oeconomiae honoris causa" has been awarded to many important Czech and international economists, e.g. the Nobel Prize laureates prof. Gary S. Becker, prof. Dr. Douglass North, prof. Milton Friedman or prof. Robert A. Mundell.

Contact for media:

Doc. Ing. Helena Sedláčková, CSc.
Vice-Dean for International Relations
Faculty of Business Administration
Tel: 224098352
Email: sedl@vse.cz