



Titel: Brest – the new EU border town
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no further information

Content:

About 70 foreign companies have settled in the free trade zone of Brest, 20 of them from Germany. The Management of a German - White Russian fish factory sees only benefits in Brest's position after the eastern enlargement of the EU. Brest will be at the border of a western market and an eastern market. Between two markets, business will be good – they hope.

Text:



Traveling from Berlin to Moscow, one has to pass through the White Russian border town of Brest. As of May, this will be the new external border of the EU. Brest, with its 300.000 residents, has a new responsible task. As a stronghold, it's supposed to protect the West against illegal immigrants. Brest has dressed up: churches as well as state palaces got a fresh paint. Elsewhere, celebrities of the past got pushed from their pedestals, but here, Lenin is still showing the way. Although the government under President Lukaschenko does not confess to democratic principles, the country, nevertheless, focuses clearly on market economy. To attract investors from the West the border town established a free trade zone without customs duty. In addition, companies here pay 20 per cent less tax than the rest of the country. More than 70 foreign firms have settled here. A bit more than a quarter of them come from Germany, like the company "deutsche see" – literally: "German lake" - processing fish in Brest. 1.500 employees, mostly women, are working in four shifts. Per day, 60 tons of fish from Norway and Iceland are turned into 240.000 packages of herring and rollmop. Converted, these women earn 200 Euro a month, double the average pay in White Russia. Fish factory and free trade zone are under President Lukaschenko's special protection. The head of the free trade zone sees Poland's entry into the EU as a chance to strengthen the position of Brest.

O Tone Nikolaj Krevezkij

Head of the free trade zone.

The new frontier is running between an eastern market and a western market. And at the border between two markets business is always good. Exactly that will be the case here in Brest. But for small businesses trading between White Russia and Poland, the border will be negativ. In January, visas were made mandatory. Since then the border is less permeable for traders. We can only hope, that the new external border of the EU will not turn into a new Berlin wall.

Here, hardly anybody knows what is, or is not allowed at the new border. That's why the EU has opened an information office in Brest. The Polish neighbouring town of Biala Podlaska and Brest are running it together. It was organised by a regional association in Karlsruhe, which maintains good relations to White Russia. And the White Russian house in Karlsruhe also contributed a website for the centre, which is clicked on daily by a lot of White Russians.



O Tone man

I want to find out about the new border regulations. What I have to show at the Polish consulate here, to get a visa for Poland.

Many here want to work in Poland.

O Tone man

I'm looking for information about work possibilities in Poland. Because in White Russia unemployment is high. Maybe I find a job in Poland.

But only specialists get a work permit. For most of the White Russians the border will probably soon be an insurmountable barrier.
