



REGIERUNG
DES FÜRSTENTUMS LIECHTENSTEIN

MINISTERIUM FÜR
PRÄSIDIALES UND FINANZEN

Prime Minister Adrian Hasler

Ambassador Information Day
29. November 2019
Museum of Arts, Vaduz

– the spoken word applies –

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Guests

Have you ever heard of the Curta? It is the world's smallest series-manufactured mechanical calculating machine. It is 85 mm high, has a diameter of 53 mm and comes in the shape of a cylinder with a crank handle on the top. Around 140'000 units of this calculating machine were produced between 1946 and 1972.

And do you know where?

Yes, in Liechtenstein!

Take a look at Matt Mullican's painting (kurze Pause und seitlich Umdrehen zum Bild, das an die Wand projiziert ist).

It refers to an icon of the industrial revolution: the steam locomotive. This industrial site, for me, symbolises a place of imagination, innovation and creativity – a place similar to the one where the Curta calculating machine may have been developed and manufactured.

For me, the history of the Curta is emblematic for the innovative spirit that has always characterized Liechtenstein and which I consider to be one of our country's integral values.

From an early date, our predecessors realized that a small state such as Liechtenstein needed innovative companies and inventors if it was to be successful. With the economic boom after World War II, incentives were deliberately created to attract entrepreneurs from abroad. In the year 1946, for example, attractive conditions persuaded Curt Herzstark – the inventor of the calculating machine – to settle in Liechtenstein.

Nothing has changed in this strategy to date. Liechtenstein promotes innovative spirit – that is to say, the drive to revolutionize the world with new ideas. This is done by the state, creating the best possible framework conditions for companies – a successful strategy, as the past decades have demonstrated. Moreover, untapped potential still remains.

One thing's for sure: State and corporate innovative spirit is one of the most important key competences for the future. And it must be in a country's interest to awaken this innovative spirit in people – and to do so from an early age. Our good education system, which aims to

produce creative people with technical knowledge, helps us to do this – people who are curious, who think flexibly and seek solutions, and who constantly question what already exists.

You can also see the importance of creativity in Mullican's painting: The grey icons in the upper third represent the fine arts. For me, this combination of fine arts and industrialization shows that creativity is an essential part of innovation.

This support, which begins with education and training, needs to be continued throughout one's life. We do this, for example, with the programme "Impulse Liechtenstein" – an innovation framework that we launched five years ago. "Impulse Liechtenstein" has developed into an important factor attracting innovative companies to Liechtenstein, and in the interim has helped to enable an active FinTech scene to become established.

The programme includes, for example, the initiation of a state innovation process. It constitutes – in simple terms – a form of "crowd sourcing" for ideas about how state framework conditions can continue to develop optimally for businesses.

The Financial Market Authority's regulatory lab also emerged from the "Impulse Liechtenstein" programme. This competence centre for new financial technologies supports innovative companies during the approvals process, and pools know-how about the technologies of the future. Since then, our Financial Market Authority has come to see itself as an enabler. In the form of a regulatory lab, it offers to accompany the emergence of a new business model. To provide advice about where fixed targets are, or where targets could be adapted to the new possibilities, instead of trimming possibilities right from the start.

Within this conjunction, I would like to address the blockchain topic in greater detail. Because when we speak of innovative spirit in the financial sector, this revolutionary technology plays a central role. At the present time we are only seeing the beginning of the opportunities that are opening up. I am confident that in future the potential of blockchain technology will extend far beyond today's business models.

However, this requires a high level of legal certainty. We have established this precondition with the Blockchain Act, which is coming into force on 1 January 2020. This makes Liechtenstein one of the first countries in the world to regulate this topic comprehensive and to create the basis for wide-ranging economic applications. And this – I am confident – will

further strengthen our positioning as an attractive, innovative and competitive financial centre.

It is important not to lose sight of the tremendous dynamism that characterises our financial centre and business location. Ten years ago, the challenges were different than they are today. And in ten years' time they will be different once again. We need to face these developments with vision and foresight. This objective is supported inter alia by the financial centre strategy that was presented at the beginning of the year. It serves as an orientation framework for the future positioning of the financial centre. On the one hand, it focuses on ensuring unrestricted and equal access to important markets and thus international cooperation, while at the same time improving state framework conditions for innovative companies.

Throughout its history, Liechtenstein has repeatedly demonstrated that it meets challenges with innovative spirit. And blockchain will certainly not be the last innovation of the digital age. In any case, I look forward to the future with great anticipation.

Just as the smallest mechanical calculating machine, the Curta, caused worldwide amazement in the year 1946, we will certainly see many more inventions of which we hardly dare to dream today.

Our innovative spirit will make it possible!

Thank you very much!