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Visit to William Hughes Ltd Factory

A British Company in Bulgaria that is Looking Forward into the Future

The British Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce (BBCC) and the British Embassy in Sofia organised a visit to William Hughes manufacturing facility near Plovdiv on 23 August 2012.

Mr Tim Buisseret in his capacity as a BBCC Board Member led the delegation. More than 20 representatives of various industries took part in the visit.

Mr Max Hughes, Managing Director, and Mr Ben Cox, General Manager, welcomed the guests and shared their experience of doing business in Bulgaria. Mr Hughes presented the company and its activities and focused on the enchanting initial moments when the business was set up in "the far corner of Europe". An emotional decision that was made on Bulgaria.

William Hughes started operations in Bulgaria in 2004 supplying the automotive and aerospace industry. The company exports all of its production to European clients and the combination of UK and Bulgarian production capability (with different strengths in aerospace and automotive respectively) gives William Hughes more strings to their bow and a better chance of winning contracts. Mr Max Hughes highlighted that it was amazing how the company has benefited from the cross-feeding.

The company employs about 130 people (30%-40% out of which are Roma minority) and they are trained to operate the machines to a level where they sometimes export those skills back to the UK.

William Hughes has undergone four expansion phases since its opening and is currently over 4000 square metres with room for more growth. The company has a high-tech range of machinery, including 22 CNC wire bending machines, spot welders, 6-axis robot welding cells; two nylon plastic coating lines, a paint line, a CMM, and many others.

A lively Q&A discussion followed the presentation. The comments and questions included the latest developments and the philosophy behind the aerospace and the automotive sectors; partnerships as a skill and creating partnerships that build on the strengths; management skills as well as the experience of working with the banking sector in Bulgaria.

Then Mr Hughes and Mr Cox showed the guests around the factory floor and they had the opportunity to witness the actual manufacturing process with all its intricacies and in great detail. The tour was followed by light refreshments in the main administrative building.

The delegates were impressed by the company's success and achievements in Bulgaria and expressed their sincere gratitude to William Hughes for their hospitality. Mr Hughes remarked that he strongly believes that there is future in manufacturing.