

Bonn: the New Profile of a City

The 20th June 1991 was the beginning of a big challenge for the City of Bonn: at this memorable date, the German Parliament decided with a narrow majority to transfer its seat and the core functions of the government to Berlin. This vote was implemented by the Berlin-Bonn Act in 1994. It determined a fair division of labour between the two cities according five political fields to Bonn. A compensation agreement amounting to 1,43 Billion Euro was granted to the city and the surrounding region in order to face the structural change.

In the meantime, based on these solid foundations, the vision of the early nineties has become an acknowledged reality: the new profile of Bonn.

The Federal City

Six out of the 15 Federal Ministries have their first seat on the Rhine. They represent the political fields determined by the Berlin-Bonn Act: education and science, culture, research and technology, telecommunication; environment and health; food, agriculture and forestry; development policy; defence. More than 20 federal authorities, amongst them the Federal Cartel Office and the Federal Court of Audit have moved from Berlin and Frankfurt to Bonn in order to partially compensate for the loss of ministerial jobs. Thus Bonn – with the title of Federal City adopted from a Swiss tradition - has become a second political focus within the strong federal system of the German Republic.

Bonn International / the UN City

The idea to transform Bonn into a centre for international cooperation has already been part of the parliamentary vote in 1991. Since then, a great number of organisations working in the international field have been attracted to the city. Together with about 150 non-governmental organisations they form a strong network. The most important success in the field of international activities, however, has been the settlement of currently 18 United Nations Organisations, amongst them the UN Climate Secretariat (UNFCCC). International activities concentrate on development cooperation, ecological topics and crisis prevention. Their common denominator is “UN in Bonn – working towards sustainable development worldwide”.

Since the summer of 2006, the nucleus of the international Bonn is the United Nations Campus next to the World Conference Center Bonn to be enlarged according to UN requirements. The UN-organisations have moved into the former office building of members of parliament.

During the last years by organising large congresses, Bonn has repeatedly proved its capacities as a convention city. Two World Climate Summits, the International Conference on Freshwater and the United Nations Talks on Afghanistan and the Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in May 2008 are only some examples.

Since the relocation of the Deutsche Welle broadcasting corporation to Bonn in 2003, the international image of Bonn is also broadcast world wide.

Bonn, a region for Science and Research

Embedded in the scientific triangle formed by the cities of Aachen, Bonn and Cologne, called the ABC-region and renowned as the most compact region of scientific research and technology in Europe, Bonn has acquired an international reputation as a scientific location. The nucleus is the university founded in 1818 with nowadays about 27 000 students. In addition, new institutes, research centres and universities of applied sciences have been created during these last years.

The scientific highlight is the CEASAR foundation (Center of Advanced European Studies and Research) focusing on interdisciplinary research on future oriented themes and the corresponding marketing strategies. Last but not least, Bonn hosts a series of leading German organisations fostering and promoting science.

Business

The services sector acquires a growing part within the economic system of Bonn, the trend shifting from public services towards private services. Important, world wide operating companies have decided to establish their headquarters in Bonn, amongst them the Deutsche Post World Net and the Deutsche Telekom together with numerous subsidiaries. The IT sector alone employs about 15.000 people in Bonn.

Culture

Being the birthplace of Ludwig van Beethoven, music ranks very high in Bonn. The annual Beethoven Festival has become an important publicity event for the composers works. The row of new museums along the Museum Mile attract a great number of visitors: the Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Bonn Art Museum, the House of the History of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Museum Alexander Koenig and the technological German Museum Bonn welcome more than one million visitors every year.

Some Figures in Brief

Bonn today is a city with over 318.000 inhabitants and registers a rare phenomenon in German cities: its statistics show an excess of births over deaths.

In Bonn and its environs, 800 IT companies give employment to 25.000 people.

Hotel business registers more than one million overnight stays per year.

The unemployment rate around 7 percent is situated clearly below the national average.