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On Thursday, October 2 afternoon, the Patriotic Hall of Carolinum was bustling with various delegates, students, politicians, ambassadors and ministers. All of these actors contributed to an exciting energy that was felt before the German Minister of Finance, Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, discussed the next steps for European Integration.

The German Minister was introduced to the eager audience by Charles University Rector, Professor Tomáš Zima. The Rector briefly explained Schäuble's history of successes as both a German and European statesman. Schäuble was then awarded a gold medal on behalf of Charles University to commemorate his exceptional contribution to education and common good.

After graciously receiving the medal, Schäuble was given further thanks by the Czech Minister of Finance, Andrej Babiš. The Czech Minister, who organised the visit, explained that Germany has always been a key business and investment partner to the Czech Republic. Babiš also thanked Schäuble for encouraging the Austrian, Hungarian, Polish and Slovakian Ministers of Finance to attend.

Following the warm welcome, Schäuble began his lecture by explaining the positive transformations that Europe has experienced over the past century. Amongst these great transformations, Schäuble pointed to the Czech Republic's independence from the Soviet Union. Charles University was then highlighted as a centre for European transformation because it has supported German and consequently European reunification.

The importance of European unity could not have been more stressed. Schäuble gave reference to the Ukrainian crisis and explained that it is more important than ever that Europe "speaks with one voice and maintain its values." He explained that by continuing to do this, Europe would maintain peace, stability and further integration.

The argument for peace, stability and further integration was also used to encourage the Czech Republic to join the Eurozone. Schäuble said that future treaty changes to regulate member states' budgets will reflect a new reality for the Eurozone and hence the door is wide open to member states who have not yet introduced the Euro. By joining, the Czech Republic would significantly contribute to what Europe should be, "multi-level democracy... a complimentary and interconnected system of democracies with different scopes and competencies."

Schäuble was however asked by Professor Michal Mejstřík of Charles University's economics department why the Czech Republic should join the Eurozone when various members of the Eurozone mismanaged their budgets. The Professor also explained that compared to most Eurozone members, the Czech Republic has quite successfully managed its own deficit. Schäuble however assured the Professor that joining the Eurozone would further the legitimacy of democratic institutions within Europe provided that common liability is instilled on all member states.

Having enjoyed the insightful lecture given by the German Minister, the audience's excited mood was transformed into a more positive one. The lecture convinced the audience that by sustaining economic partnerships, regulating European banks and national budgets, and by encouraging economic competition, that Europe will continue to be a successful democratic institution that can be improved through trial and error.



Cayla Tomás Murray studies International Politics BSc at Brunel University of London. She will be studying in Prague for two semesters through the Erasmus+ programme. Cayla was born in Johannesburg and raised in Cape Town. Her interest in international politics began at a young age when she first noticed the contentious issues of racism, Apartheid and poverty that still ensued despite international pressures on South Africa government. Her interests in international politics have since been cemented by her work as a parliamentary researcher at Westminster Parliament and by her role with the Democratic Alliance Abroad as the Representative for Prague. Cayla's journalistic interests include international relations, economics, politics and gender. She hopes to use her time with iForum to broaden her awareness on these topics.