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1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1.1. AmCham holds its Seventh Annual Meeting of the General Assembly

Pristina, January 14, 2021 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo held its Annual Meeting of the General Assembly, which similarly, to most AmCham events in 2020, was organized virtually as well, with the participation of 104 delegates. The delegates of the General Assembly were presented with the 2020 report of activities and financials, including last year’s achievements, commending the work of the Executive Director and the staff in what was the most difficult year. Pursuant to the bylaws of the Chamber, the General Assembly approved the 2021 Annual Program and Supporting Budget.

In addition, the General Assembly elected seven untitled members of the Board of Governors: Afrore Rudi (Deloitte / U.S. company), Lorik Fejzullau (Birra Peja / U.S. citizen), Albena Pllana (U.S. citizen), Gjeni Shporta (American Councils / U.S. company), Shkumbin Mucolli (Burger King / U.S. company), Michael Gold (Crimson Capital / U.S. citizen), and Ardian Hoxha (American School of Kosova / Non-U.S. company).

Finally, AmCham thanks the other eligible nominees who ran for the Board this year, Mergim Prishtina (Avex Health/Trepharm / Non-U.S. company), Gazmend Selmani (PBC / Non-U.S. company), Lorent Gordi (Philip Morris / U.S. company), Nina Elezovic (Coca Cola HBC / U.S. company), Dafine Arifi (Elba Technology / Non-U.S. company), and Genci Beribashi (NewCo Ferronikeli / Non-U.S. company).

2. GENERAL EVENTS

2.1. Law enforcers to use non-lethal weapons to diffuse criminal activity

Pristina, January 21, 2021 – Ensuring proper rule of law and the effectiveness of tools used by law enforcers are necessary in order to facilitate the diffusion of difficult situations without resorting to violence in cases of crime. This was one of the subjects addressed during a webinar organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, our patron member Katana and the Axon Enterprise. Nick Davies, International Training Manager at Axon, presented the main mission of this company, which is to protect life and according to him, they are doing so by functionalizing, amongst other things, unlethal yet effective Conducted Energy Weapons (CEW). As stated by Davies, this mission is being fulfilled by the advancement of these weapons and their globalization in order to render the use of firearms by police officers unnecessary. He provided the participants with a presentation of their latest products, which include a range of tasers and body-cameras used by police officers during patrols.

While referring to statistics taken by law-enforcement institutions, the Taser Master Instructor at Axon, Alexander Milyukov, stated that tasers are the safest choice of weapon for police officers as well as civilians as they are incapacitating, however, the death rate is minimal. Throughout the presentation, in addition to CEWs, Axon representatives also introduced the Digitalized Management Evidence System (DMES), which can be utilized as a server system for law-enforcement institutions to store and review video-recordings taken by police officers during conflicts, as well as signalers for additional back-up.

Members of AmCham and participants of the webinar had the opportunity to inquire regarding these products, which will soon be available for Kosovo.

2.2. Proper company branding leads to the recruitment of the right talents

Pristina, January 26, 2021 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has begun implementing the Training Tuesday activity, on the basis of which, every two months, various training sessions, regarding subjects relevant to the country’s business community will be organized. During the first session, Dalina Gjicali, Managing Director of EPPC Albania and Kosovo trained the attendees on recruitment and staff management in the virtual world. Comparing the trends created, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Gjicali highlighted the importance Human Resources Department has when it comes to ensuring the progress of work processes within the company, especially recruitment, where she considered that the
inability to properly assess the candidate, their body language and reactions to traditional recruitment methods as a challenge. She added that managing staff remotely is also a big challenge companies are facing.

Gjicali also emphasized the importance of properly branding the company in order to create the image of the ideal employer, as well as, proactivity in marketing while adding that the human capital and the digital footprint set the standard and expectations recruits have for the company. She recommended the creation and strengthening of an online presence in all the platforms used by the youth, stating that it must be adjusted to fit social media trends as that creates a linking bridge between the employer and the talents necessary to the company. According to Gjicali, due to the need for social distancing, companies must create and implement policies that enable working from home, which has now, not only become the new reality for some companies, but it has also become a requirement of the labor force on the basis of schedule flexibility.

During this training, representatives of Human Resources Departments in AmCham, member companies spoke of, and exchanged their processes and policies for remote recruitment and staff managing in their attempts to ensure the continuation of the company, despite all the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3. Court’s inefficiency discourages foreign investments

Prishtina, January 28, 2021 – Representatives of the Justice System in Kosovo, within the framework of the virtual forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, have estimated that the stagnation in adopting the Law on the Commercial Court is a consequence of political instability, and highlighted that in other circumstances, it would strengthen the judiciary system.

During the virtual forum held with representatives of the Justice System, it was stated that the implementation of this Court would significantly improve the business doing environment, as well as, all alternative methods, including arbitration and mediation would be intertwined within it. While estimating that the justice system in Kosovo has faced various challenges, especially during the pandemic, representatives of the justice system, during the virtual forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo discussed upon court’s efficiency during the pandemic, as well as, the need to promote alternative methods for dispute resolution.

Mahir Tutuli, Judge in the Department of Economic Affairs at the Court of Appeals stated that the justice system in Kosovo has faced a lot of challenges, especially following the outbreak of the pandemic, as preventive anti-COVID-19 measures only allowed the handling of essential cases, without the physical presence of parties. According to Tutuli, although the technical basis of holding virtual sessions exists, depending on the nature of the case, most of the challenges Kosovo’s judiciary system is facing would be solved with the implementation of the Commercial Court. Regarding this subject, he stated that this must be treated as a priority as this court would significantly improve the country’s business doing environment, whereas strengthening the legal framework for commercial dispute resolution would increase security and attract foreign investors. On an ending note, Tutuli emphasized the need to promote alternative methods for dispute resolution, such as arbitration as decisions made through it are recognized by courts and mitigate their workload.

Attorney-at-Law, Taulant Hodaj stressed the need to create the necessary conditions to hold virtual sessions to avoid courts being overloaded and accelerate the processes for parties that have active cases in these courts. While referring to the Commercial Court, Hodaj said that mistakes of the past must not be repeated, since in the circumstances we are in now, this court would strengthen the country’s judiciary system, as well as, the development of businesses. Furthermore, Hodaj stressed that alternative measures, such as, arbitration and mediation are intertwined with the processes of the Commercial Court, therefore organizations, such as, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, other relevant stakeholders, and state institutions must continue their efforts to raise awareness, regarding the existence and availability of these methods, especially within the business community. Hodaj concluded the forum by emphasizing that legal representatives recommend arbitration on a regular basis.
2.4. Bypassing the manufacturing sector hinders the country’s economic development

*Prishtina, January 29, 2021* – As a sector that ensures job creation and meeting local demand, manufacturing is one of the most influential pillars of the economy, however, it is facing many challenges. Due to the nature of their activities that cannot be carried out remotely, the measures that restricted free movement during 2020, have not allowed the development of this sector. During the virtual forum, organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, representatives of manufacturing companies shared their experiences on how they have handled the declining market demand, delays in approving state financial aid, and the political instability during the pandemic period. They also discussed the measures and policies that must be implemented by the incoming Government to ensure the recovery of this sector and of Kosovo’s economy.

Lorik Fejzullahu, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Birra Peja, and also a member of AmCham’s Board of Governors, spoke about the need to improve trade relations with the region and Custom processes. Fejzullahu also addressed the issue of dumping, which continues to harm local producers, while strongly recommending and calling on the Government, and other relevant state institutions, to increase the promotion of local products in creating and implementing clear policies to protect local producers. Fejzullahu also stressed that in order to ensure economic empowerment and the proper interaction between businesses and politics, a fiscal economic council composed of business representatives must be established.

Arbnore Musliu-Kunushefci, Finance Manager at Eurometal, stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the impact of already existing issues they face in their production activities, especially on Value Added Tax (VAT), which negatively affects the attraction of, both, local and foreign investors. She further stressed that despite these challenges, exports to other countries have been the main source of revenues during this period and that local lawmakers must also take into consideration small companies, in identifying their needs and providing the necessary support. The owner of Elsa Group, Brahim Selimaj, underlined the impact of the production sector on the state coffers, as well as the need to further strengthen cooperation within the manufacturing community. He also stressed that bureaucratic procedures and barriers should be addressed by representatives of relevant sectors and return state focus on the economy and its development. He added that the cooperation between Kosovo and Albania on trade relations should be strengthened further.

Teuta Kurshumlija, Exports Manager at Stone Castle, and also the moderator of the forum, stated that the incoming Government must prioritize the production sector and address unfair competition and low prices of foreign products in the Albanian market, which makes local products less appealing.

2.5. Access to finance, key turning point for economic recovery

*Prishtina, February 3, 2021* – Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of measures that restricted the movement and economic activities, the private sector, and the business community have faced access to finance as one of the main barriers to their development.

Challenges which local and foreign businesses operating in Kosovo continue to face, the dependency in remittances the opportunities and alleviation in access to finance deriving from the financial sector, as well as their perspective on the current state and economic development, were some of the key topics discussed during the virtual forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

The Chief Executive Officer of KEP Trust, Shpend Nura stated that during the pre-pandemic period, the micro-financial sector has shown a positive trend of growth, as well as significant improvement and progress in customer service. While relating to decisions made by the financial sector, he said that offering the possibility of loan restructuring in the second quarter of 2020 as an alleviative measure for businesses has been a powerful driver of economic recovery. Nura, also stated that in order to ensure survival and economic development, coordinated response and action by economic stakeholders and relevant institutions is imperative.
Arijan Haxhibeqiri, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Banka Ekonomike, stated that in the context of financial crises, despite the different nature of the crisis in 2008-2010, compared to the crisis during the pandemic period, developed economies have managed to create monetary and fiscal policies, in response to the negative financial impact of the crisis in 2008-2010, while the crisis caused by the pandemic has caught everyone unprepared. Haxhibeqiri added that in Kosovo, all relevant parties have given their contribution in managing the situation. Haxhibeqiri, also stressed that the trend of financing customers by banks has continued throughout this time.

Ramis Ahmetaj, Business Consultant stated that despite negative projections and challenges already known of, there is space for optimism in regards to the country’s economic recovery, in the near future. Ahmetaj also stated that market demands have been stable and also highlighted that financing contracts with foreign financial institutions are being signed, thus laying a stable foundation for the future. Further, he gave special emphasis to the need for financial intermediaries, as they have a significant impact on economic development, in creating proper strategies of action between the financial sector and businesses, as well as in avoiding unnecessary risks.

Fiknete Balaj-Haliti, Chief Financial Officer at Cacttus and member of AmCham’s Finance Committee, as well as, moderator of this forum, referred to reports by international financial institutions, which projected a considerable decline in Kosovo’s economy, specifically the tourism, manufacturing, and exports sector. In this regard, she stated that in order for the private sector and businesses to develop, additional, more comprehensive financing resources must be created.

2.6. Kosovo’s economic recovery is strictly impeded by political instability

**Prishtina, February 8, 2021** – The period of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and the many side effects it has caused has been one of the most eventful periods during the recent years, as seen from an economic lens. During the next virtual forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, the media perspective of the country’s economic challenges was discussed with the journalist Albert Spahiu.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, at the same time, being the moderator of this forum, stated that AmCham had long planned to organize a forum during which beyond the public and private sector’s point of view, the media sector as a neutral and objective party would discuss the actual economic challenges.

Albert Spahiu, business journalist at Telegrafi, stated that he regards 2020 as the most active year in economic journalism, considering that Kosovo, ever since the beginning of the year has faced a variety of economic and political issues, including various other events in addition to the pandemic. According to Spahiu, the year that was left behind has been the year of Kosovo’s economic failure, which occurred largely due to the country’s political in-stability and discoordination in addressing the matters deriving from the pandemic, the consequences of which can be seen in the grave losses of the private sector, including the loss of citizens’ jobs.

Spahiu added that as a reporter of such events, he considers that the frequent change of governments impedes a stable development of Kosovo, while emphasizing that this instability also affects the country’s ability to attract investments. Furthermore, he also commented on the electoral campaign of February 14th, by stating that most of the political parties are ambiguous in transmitting their means to overcoming the economic crisis caused by the pandemic.

“I consider that the promises made during these elections are, let’s say, not wrong, but they lack seriousness and intention, considering that we are going through a pandemic crisis. Most of the parties are not offering an alternative on how Kosovo must overcome this crisis”, stated Spahiu.

He also spoke of the need to convert the remittances sent from diaspora into direct investments, while mentioning that last year, there has been a record number of remittances sent to Kosovo.
2.7. **AmCham Kosovo and BCC organize a workshop regarding strategic management in times of crisis**

*Pristina, February 10, 2021* – Strategic preparedness and response planning are crucial aspects of management, whereas the unprecedented crisis caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 has recently emphasized the need for businesses to be very cautious when addressing unforeseen challenges. With the aim of discussing important aspects of this matter, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and the Business Consultants Council (BCC) organized a workshop regarding strategic management in times of crisis.

During this event, the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, stated that in terms of managerial challenges, he believes that there has never been a crisis worse than the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Zeka further noted that he considers this session as highly important, considering that it will tackle both the lessons learned from the crisis as well as the level of businesses’ preparedness to prevent its further, deeper, negative impacts.

Whereas, the Executive Director of Business Consultants Council, Jehona Lluka, spoke about the contribution of this association during 2020, noting that in cooperation with the EBRD they have prepared an edition consisting of 14 professional videos on topics related to sectors’ specialization, in order for businesses to benefit from clearer strategies on overcoming the crisis.

The panel of speakers for this workshop comprised of three experts in the field of consulting, among which was Bersant Disha, Co-founder and Executive Director at Recura Financials, who spoke of various aspects of company planning, where he named proactivity in facing issues as quite imperative, compared to making decisions on a whim.

Violeta Haxhiilazi, Head of Kosovo Office for the professional services company, Mazaars Albania & Kosovo, amongst other things, highlighted the important role of businesses consulting with consultants, especially when it comes to adjusting their business model in times of crisis, as well as turning risk into opportunity.

Hamëz Morina, Co-founder and Managing Partner at ECIKS, elaborated on the aspects that have changed in strategic management, while placing special emphasis on the fact that now, strategic management is far more complex, and it must take a comprehensive, and holistic performance view, while also including the short, medium, and long-term goals of the company.

2.8. **Innovation in business paves the way for integration in the global market**

*Pristina, February 15, 2021* – Despite the fact that innovation infrastructure in Kosovo is still at a developing stage with plenty of space for improvement, it can be considered that some of the businesses in the country have been quite successful in incorporating innovation within their activity, regardless of the circumstances. The exploring of opportunities for the inclusion of innovation initiatives in businesses, as well as the increase of corporate creativity were the main points discussed during the next virtual forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

This event was moderated by Dafina Arifi, Lead Business Analyst at Elba Technology, who stated that innovation and creativity are catalysts for digitalization and transformative change. Arifi furthermore stated that the company she represents is very engaged in the European market in the field of digitalization, while also noting that it has been recognized as one of the top ten companies in offering robotics services in Europe.

Mentor Pllana, Co-founder and Managing Director at BP Home was a keynote speaker for this event, noting that the activity of this company is highly focused on transformation from traditional construction to digital manufacturing of houses, based on sustainability. Plana considered innovation as a process through which with a little input, a lot can be produced, while also speaking of the need for the country to focus on cooperation, innovation, and globalization, in order for better living conditions to be created.

According to Plana, Kosovo should focus on the digitization of processes, shifting to renewable energy sources, and deepening the usage of the internet for globalization, always in compliance with sustainable
development goals. He also spoke of the country’s opportunities to integrate into global markets, thus noting the unlimited potential of the youth of the country, while at the same time adding that discourse should not be focused on negative aspects.

“We should change the lens, Kosovo is great, and Kosovo has companies which have the potential to create products and services for the global market,” stated Plana.

2.9. Judiciary challenges have a negative impact on efficient solving of commercial disputes

Prishtina, February 16, 2021 – The various difficulties in the functioning of courts undoubtedly play a role in their performance, thus also creating challenges for parties in resolving respective disputes, with special emphasis on commercial ones. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has not spared efforts to support the development of the justice system in Kosovo, therefore, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in cooperation with the USAID Commercial Justice Program have organized a virtual forum where representatives of projects from this organization discussed courts’ performance and arbitration.

During this forum, Tea Blakaj Hoxha, Secretary General of AmCham Arbitration Center, and moderator of the discussion, emphasized that considering the many investments USAID has made in different projects related to the justice system in general, or commercial justice in specific, it is highly important to hear about this organization’s expectations for the future of justice in Kosovo.

Vjosa Shkodra, Deputy Chief of Party at USAID Commercial Justice Activity, noted that one of the main objectives of this program is to increase capacities for developing commercial disputes within the Court of Appeal. In this case, according to Shkodra, following a careful performance evaluation of this court in the Department for Economic Affairs, including here case management, decision-making and engagement of judges or supportive staff, it has been estimated that it is absolutely necessary for the justice system in Kosovo to have a commercial court. This would also be a single address for the requests of businesses and foreign investors, stated Shkodra. Furthermore, she considered case delays, lack of expertise, the small number of judges and professional collaborators as main problems with which this court is faced.

Artan Hadri, Court Performance Specialist at USAID Justice in Kosovo Program, noted that the performance of courts, especially recently, has been notably lower due to the pandemic. Hadri highlighted that USAID has been supporting the justice system in Kosovo for a long time, be it directly, or indirectly through human capacities. He further noted that USAID has also been very active in supporting and promoting alternative methods for dispute resolution. According to Hadri, during this time, all courts and departments are in need of greater inclusion of professional collaborators, as well as administrative staff support. Nevertheless, he observed the achievement of such an objective as very unlikely during this year, as a consequence of lower budget due to the fight with the pandemic.

Representatives of AmCham business members were also part of this discussion, where together with the panelists they had the opportunity to discuss issues such as the recognition and execution of arbitration decisions in courts of other countries, the inefficiency of the court and its impact on business activity, and the usage of arbitration in general, among other things.

2.10. Business community expects the new Government to demonstrate greater stability in its approach

Prishtina, February 16, 2021 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo hosted a livestreaming roundtable of discussion, during which, together with representatives of AmCham Board of Governors as well as respective committees within this organization, the recommendations of private sector enterprises for the new Government which is expected to be created following the latest parliamentary elections were discussed. Immediate economic package support for pandemic-affected businesses, the completion of the legal framework in a consistent manner, combating the informal economy, functionalizing the market economy, and supporting manufacturing were some of the recommendations summarized in this discussion, among others.
The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, stated that being cognizant of the challenges that have characterized Kosovo’s economy continuously, on top of those we have faced last year since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many tasks await the Government, and the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo will continue to be active in its advocacy efforts while mentioning that AmCham will submit a document with concrete recommendations from the private sector to the Government.

Part of the panel for this discussion was Dardan Sejdiu, consultant and AmCham member, who said that on top of his expectations is the duration of a full Government mandate, which he considers to be a precondition for general social stability, particularly in the economic aspect as well as that of development policies. According to Sejdiu, given the contraction of the economy due to the pandemic, the Government should use the low level of public debt so as to seriously intervene by pouring money into the economy, and at the same time provide clarity of fiscal and trade policies, in order to provide businesses with certainty for investment.

Moreover, he stated that he expects the Government to generally provide a clearer approach regarding fiscal and trade policies, social and public property and social protection schemes. Such clarity would affect a general easing and consequently increase consumption, having some impact on increasing aggregate demand, which would then translate to an increase in public revenues.

Whereas, the other panelist, Entrepreneur and Member of AmCham Board of Governors, Ardian Hoxha, expressed his overall dissatisfaction about the delay in the economic intervention of the state, by holding the entire political class responsible for their role in not implementing the necessary aid for businesses. Hoxha stated that following the last election campaign, the business community rightfully expects from the new Government a total opening of the economy, without any restrictions. Furthermore, he reiterated the need to implement economic packages to help the private sector, at the same time considering possibilities for increasing public debt.

“A SWOT analysis should be conducted to see where Kosovo stands in comparison with the countries of the region and beyond, so as to focus on the opportunities much more than on the risks or weak points we have,” said Hoxha.

This roundtable discussion was also attended by representatives and chairpersons of AmCham committees. The chairwoman of the Tax Committee, Gresë Rexhepi from the company PwC, stressed the need to take the passage of fiscal legislation seriously, together with combating informality. The chairman of the committee for Trade and Customs, Avni Krasniqi from the company Delfin, mentioned the need for formalization of the market, which would also clarify fiscal and trade policies.

Shkumbin Muçolli, the member of AmCham Board of Governors, recommended the creation of packages dedicated to the sectors most affected by the pandemic, as well as the digitalization and formalization of the economy. From a manufacturer’s perspective, Gojart Kelmendi from EuroKosova, a member of the Manufacturing Committee, stated that he expects the Government to direct public spending to locally produced goods, as well as to create tax incentives for exports. Whereas, Mal Osmani, a representative from the company Deloitte, stressed the need for orientation towards green policies and sustainable development.

2.11. Implementation of CSR policy highlights the positive impact of businesses in society

Prishtina, February 23, 2021 – Businesses’ contribution to society is of particular importance in improving the quality of life and well-being of the communities in which they operate. Whereas, creating specific policies for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within companies is a way of showing that private enterprises are aware and responsible for the impact of their decisions on the environment that surrounds them. These were said, among other things, in the last virtual forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, during which the topic of creating CSR policy was addressed.

The moderator of this event, Valentina Gara, Public Relations Manager at Prishtina International Airport, said that Corporate Social Responsibility policies are of particular importance in the development of
companies, as well as of the society in which they operate. According to Gara, such policies ensure that companies act ethically, by being accountable to society or by emphasizing the importance of an enterprise’s impact on society, economy, environment and overall well-being.

Part of the panel for this discussion were representatives of AmCham member businesses, which are quite active in the field of CSR, and which base their activity on already-created CSR policies within their companies.

Afrika Zyferi, Public Relations Expert at IPKO Telecommunications, stated that this enterprise is dedicated to working for giving back to society, while noting that it already has a specific CSR policy implemented, together with a functional committee that implements such policy and identifies or estimates diverse causes to be supported. Zyferi further said that it would be easier for each company to develop its CSR efforts if institutions would research and identify the fields in which there is more necessity for corporate social responsibility to be expressed.

Whereas, Besnik Haziri, Branch Manager at ProCredit Bank Kosova said that the overall creation of CSR policy from businesses would undoubtedly have an impact in improving citizens’ lives while adding that it is of significant importance for these policies to be implemented and not only remain in paper. Haziri stated that ProCredit bank gives special importance to the impact that the projects it finances have on society and the environment while mentioning the fact that one of the main objectives of this company is the orientation of Kosovo towards consumption of renewable energy, with a key focus on solar energy.

2.12. Credit Guarantee Fund explains procedures for the benefit of businesses

Prishtina, February 24, 2021 – The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted economic activity, by limiting the operation of many industries, and thus affecting large declines in their turnover. The role of the Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund (KCGF) in facilitating access to finance, the procedures that businesses must follow to use the guaranteeing from this fund, its financing limits, and the role of commercial banks in determining the beneficiaries, were discussed during the last roundtable organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, with a panel of representatives from this institution, as well as the banking sector in the country.

Besnik Berisha, Executive Director of the Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund, spoke about the role of this institution in helping access to finance for small and medium enterprises, with special emphasis on its activity during the period of economic recovery. According to Berisha, KCGF, by guaranteeing the loan portfolio of partner banks, has managed to help facilitate access to finance for local businesses, in accordance with the Law on Economic Recovery. He stated that during this period, the Fund has increased the coverage of credit guarantee up to 80% of the loan value, compared to the previous coverage value of 50%. Berisha announced that in order to use this fund, businesses must apply for loans in commercial banks and undergo bank procedures, while if the value of their collateral is insufficient, banks have at their discretion the possibility of issuing loans by using the guarantee from KCGF.

Commercial bank representatives were also participants in the panel for this event. Suat Bakkal, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Banka Kombetare Tregtare noted that Kosovo has the best performing banking sector in the region while mentioning that KCGF plays a very important role in risk management and the ability of banks to issue more loans. Regardless of that, he stressed that the stability of this fund is key for the continuity of the banking system, and as such, it should be wisely used by banks.

The Chief Financial Officer at TEB Bank, Rezak Fetai, said the banking system as a whole has played an important role in dealing with the pandemic situation. According to him, a positive aspect of the system was that it entered this crisis with successful indicators, which enabled it to respond appropriately to it. Fetai stated that during the time when the financial crisis started, TEB bank had decided to create special credit lines to help existing businesses, using the agreement with the Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund to increase the level of lending.

2.13. Effective employee evaluation systems are crucial in enhancing employee performance

Prishtina, March 2, 2021 – In continuation of the activity “Training Tuesday”, organized every two months by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo to address various topics relevant to the business
community through training by professional lecturers, the second edition of this activity was organized today, focusing on the topic of performance evaluation and salary determination on an individual basis. The challenges of understanding change from the executive and employee level, change management cycle, performance evaluation system, as well as defining the criteria for setting the initial salary were discussed during this training.

The training was delivered by Shkumbin Ibraimi, Managing Partner and Co-founder of the recruitment and leadership advancement company, Mercurius Consulting. Ibraimi described the communication and cooperation between the executive level and the employees as very important, especially in the aspect of implementing changes, while also explaining the change management cycle. According to him, day-by-day organizational structures are aiming to create an inclusive organizational culture, operating not with a fixed mindset, but with a growth mindset that takes the values of all employees into consideration.

Speaking on performance evaluation, he pointed out the need to meet hygienic factors, which deal with the manner of how work is done, as well as the motivating ones, which have to do with the nature of work itself. Ibraimi said that there can be no standard evaluation system, as industries and departments within companies are of different natures. However, according to him, having an evaluation system is key for every company.

During this event, the determination of the criteria for setting the initial salary was also discussed, for which, according to Ibraimi, the formal factor, which includes the set of experience, education, and training of an employee, as well as the individual factor, which includes the skills of an employee should both be considered. Noting the importance of language, Ibraimi recommended participants to refer to the performance evaluation process as a developmental conversation with employees, while advising that it be a relaxed meeting, so as to not cause negative psychological effects.

2.14. Mediation can serve for resolving labor-related disputes

Pristina, March 9, 2021 – Labor disputes in Kosovo are usually resolved through the court, while judges of civil cases are overloaded with various cases, which are not necessarily profiled exclusively in labor disputes, thus causing delays for their resolving. The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a virtual forum to discuss the topic of labor-related dispute resolution, with representatives from the private sector, Kosovo Judicial Council, and the Supreme Court.

During this forum, the Director of the Legal Department inside Kosovo Judicial Council, Astrit Hoti, spoke about the legislation that regulates labor issues, while saying that disputes of this nature are usually complex and vary from case to case. While referring to the statistics of labor dispute settlement within a year in the courts of Kosovo, Hoti said that the largest number of unresolved cases is related to damage compensation issues.

Whereas, Arbër Krasniqi, General Counsel at KEDS, said that among the main challenges for this company remains the duration of disputes in court, despite the fact that the law provides that this nature of disputes be treated with legal priority. According to Krasniqi, given the court’s workload and the fact that a judge handles several cases, profiling, and training of judges would be very helpful. Krasniqi emphasized that KEDS has over 2000 employees, and since the beginning of its operation in Kosovo it has a working code developed and accessible to all employees, while it also has an internal disciplinary commission.

2.15. Legislation regarding construction sector should be supplemented in consultation with the private sector

Pristina, March 11, 2021 – The various challenges of the construction sector, namely those deriving from the legislation that regulates the sector, were discussed in the next virtual forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo. During this event, a panel of experts from this sector, among other things, considered that construction legislation, in general, has room to be further supplemented, in consultation with relevant stakeholders operating in the field of construction.
The moderator of this discussion, Gresa Neziri, Architect and Urban Planner at Institute for Science and Technology – INSI, spoke of the Law on Construction, stating that this law is part of the latest legal framework in this aspect in Kosovo, which has been created around nine years ago and includes updates in the previous law which defined some points for improving and facilitating the obtaining of permits.

Ferhat Bejtullahu, Consulting Architect at Tregtia, spoke of the positive and negative aspects of the Law on Construction. As an advantage deriving from the latest changes in this law, Bejtullahu considered the definition of destination of payments made to municipalities. Whereas, as a negative factor he considered the fact that in general, relevant stakeholders operating in the construction and spatial planning sectors have not been consulted regarding the creation of construction legislation. He further noted that it is necessary for the construction legal framework, in general, to be reviewed, and to specifically note environmental issues, which according to him have not been tackled appropriately by either the current or the upcoming political class.

During this forum, the case on object legalization, and the issue of working toward a more sustainable development which includes economic and social development, as well as environmental protection, were also discussed.

### 2.16. Legalization of unpermitted constructions brings many benefits to the citizens of Kosovo

**Prishtina, March 16, 2021 –** The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in cooperation with USAID Economic Governance Program organized a virtual discussion regarding the legalization of unpermitted construction. Part of the panel for this virtual discussion were representatives from the Ministry of Economy and Environment, the Municipality of Prishtina, and the Kosovo Cadastral Agency. During this discussion, the progress of this process so far was emphasized.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, noted that the legalization process brings multidimensional benefits to citizens and the private sector, starting from the unimpeded use of property rights, as well as the putting of these properties in function of economic development. Zeka stated that there is a great loss of economic potential deriving from the impossibility of using unpermitted constructions as a mortgage for access to finance, or for business and investment activities.

Avni Ahmeti, Chief Executive Officer of the Kosovo Cadastral Agency, spoke about the importance of registering constructions in the Cadaster, and the benefits of citizens from this process, starting from property clarity, legal protection, secure transfer of property rights through sale and inheritance, and finally the possibility for a mortgage. Ahmeti said that the agency he leads has been a promoter of legalization from the beginning, as it considers this process as one of the main pillars for creating better welfare for the citizens of Kosovo. According to him, the agency has advanced the internal system and property certificates which now are issued to citizens in better detail, has simplified the mortgage registration procedures, and has drafted a number of instructions that help the municipal cadastral offices to register as many constructions as possible. He invited all cadastral offices, in all municipalities, to cooperate closely with the directorates of urbanism because this cooperation is not only desirable but is a prerequisite for the success of the legalization process.

### 2.17. The private sector demands the postponement of energy market liberalization

**Prishtina, March 17, 2021 –** The challenges of the private sector in Kosovo related to energy remain numerous. The process of liberalization of the energy market is an important issue for the business community, which has consistently advocated for the postponement of this process, given that the current circumstances are not favorable for such an action. Cognizant of the importance of this issue, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a forum of discussion on energy market liberalization, with panelists representatives from the Energy Regulatory Office, the Assembly of Kosovo, the Secretariat of the Energy Community Treaty, as well as the private sector.

AmCham Executive Director, Arian Zeka, stressed that this issue is no longer a new topic for the business community, as this is the third year of efforts to push the process of what is known as energy market
liberalization. He said that despite the fact that in Kosovo several operators for electricity supply are licensed, it should be noted that only one of them has the capacity to function in practice as a supplier of last resort. According to Zeka, in such circumstances of limited supply, the bargaining power of commercial consumers is more limited, causing them to pay higher electricity tariffs than the average regulated tariff.

The Member of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, Mimoza Kusari-Lila, said that the problem with the liberalization of the energy market is one of the challenges that are being caused to the business community as a result of political uncertainty, but also due to the lack of clear strategies on developments that need to be decided in the energy sector. She said that the issue of the lack of an ERO board creates even more difficulties in this regard, while also noting the possibilities of the Assembly of Kosovo to act in this case.

The Director of the Energy Regulatory Office in Kosovo, Petrit Pepaj, said that the energy transition process is very complex. He spoke about the postponement of the market liberalization process, stressing that at the request of the chambers of commerce and the relevant parliamentary committee, this process has been postponed for three years. Pepaj said that last year, the Secretariat of the Energy Community has raised a notice to the Regulator for inaction regarding market liberalization, which has worried this institution. He said that ERO must respect the law, and that concerns can be overcome in the short term if suppliers find customers.

Visar Ramajli, Co-Owner and Managing Partner in KIVO, said that the business community is seeking this postponement because this market deregulation implies a price increase, which is then followed by an increase in production costs, which for businesses translate to new difficulties.

Arben Kllokoqi, an expert in the Secretariat of the Energy Community Treaty, said that the price increase should be subject to review by the Regulator in terms of competition. He stressed that it is very important to know the factors that cause such high growth, and to monitor the offers, since if there is only one supplier with market power, it may abuse the market.

2.18. Pharmaceutical sector requires the alleviation of bureaucratic procedures for registration of medical products

Pristina, March 18, 2021 – The pharmaceutical sector in Kosovo, as one of the key sectors contributing to the general well-being of the public, faces various challenges. Among the most worrying of these challenges are the smuggling of pharmaceutical goods, bureaucratic procedures for registration of products, as well as high prices. This was concluded during the latest virtual forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, during which the regulation of the pharmaceutical sector was discussed with a panel of experts from this sector.

Armend Agani, Chairman of AmCham Healthcare Committee, Director of Agani and moderator of the forum, noted that given the major problems of the pharmaceutical sector of Kosovo, it is very important to discuss as often as possible the most key and urgent problems, as well as the possibilities for giving them solutions.

Arianit Jakupi, President of the Kosovo Chamber of Pharmacists, stated that the pharmaceutical sector in Kosovo is characterized by a work which especially during the last year has shown extraordinary importance, being one of the main pillars of pandemic management. He said that one of the biggest concerns of this sector remains the smuggling of medicine products, as an issue that needs to be resolved urgently. According to Jakupi, there is still a lot of work to be done for a consolidated pharmaceutical sector, and the full implementation of good practices of the pharmaceutical sector throughout its chain.

It was said that given Kosovo's small market, there are not many manufacturers interested in registering their products in the country. According to him, high taxes and bureaucratic procedures are discouraging even for those who are interested, so more efforts should be put on alleviating such procedures. Furthermore, Abdullahu also spoke about drug registration procedures, and mentioned the need to better regulate the issue of shortage of products in the market.

Milot Cena, Business Development Manager at Asgeto, spoke about the standardization of operating conditions of pharmaceutical distributors, emphasizing that in Kosovo there are over 20 licensed warehouses, while in other countries with larger populations there is usually a much smaller number of
such warehouses. According to Cena, it is necessary to create a special law on pharmacy, which has been discussed for a long time by this sector, while the same would better coordinate and regulate the sector.

Members stressed that as domestic producers, this company does not enjoy the most favorable conditions, and faces even more challenging procedures compared to importing companies. According to Hoxha, a major problem has to do with the aspect of banderoles, which for local producers must be issued through a commission, while importers can receive them within a day through online application. He said that in terms of market regulation, the countries of the region should be taken as an example regarding registration and control of products.

2.19. **Whistleblowing, among the most effective tools in the fight against corruption**

*Prishtina, March 23, 2021 –* Through whistleblowing, employees in either the public or private sector enjoy the right to report information for witnessing violations of the public interest. Such a process is very important for the identification and prevention of cases of corruption, whereas, whistleblowers are guaranteed protection through the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers. In its next virtual forum, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo discussed the use of this mechanism in the fight against corruption, with representative panelists from the Kosovo Anti-Corruption Agency (ACC), which under the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers has various obligations related to this process, as well as FOL Movement, which has been very active in monitoring the implementation of this law.

This forum was moderated by attorney Kushtrim Palushi, Partner at the law firm RPHS Law, who, while introducing the topic and the panelists, stated that the current Law on Protection of Whistleblowers is much more advanced than the previous law, and the same is in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe and international policies for the protection of whistleblowers.

One of the panel speakers for this event was the Director of the Department for Combating Corruption within the Anti-Corruption Agency, Blerim Kelmendi, who noted that this agency is defined as a direct body responsible for the implementation of the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers, and explained the actions that this institution has taken to ensure the implementation of such law. Kelmendi highlighted that ACA has three main tasks arising from this law, which relate to aspects of the implementation of external whistleblowing for the public sector, creation of requests for initiation of minor offense proceedings in case of violations of the law by responsible officials and institutions, as well as reception of signaling reports from public and private institutions. During this discussion, Kelmendi considered the issue of trust in the relationship between the whistleblower and the responsible official as crucial, especially for the public sector.

Whereas, from a civil society perspective, Mexhide Demolli, director of FOL Movement, which has been very engaged in advocacy for greater implementation of this law, considered that despite the fact that the law is advanced, there is a significant lack of its implementation, whether in the public or the private sector. Demolli noted that the current law enables three types of whistleblowing, namely internal, i.e., within the organization; external, which means whistleblowing at the ACA for the public sector, and at the Labor Inspectorate for the private sector, as well as public signaling, which can be done through the media or respective NGOs. According to Demolli, taking into account examples from other countries, whistleblowing has proven to be one of the most effective ways of fighting corruption.

Issues such as the lack of publication of the list of officials responsible for whistleblowing in public institutions, the number of officials responsible for this process within an institution, as well as methods of whistleblowing were also discussed during this forum. Panelists considered that the role of whistleblowers is extraordinary in the fight against corruption because its identification and prevention become easier when reported from within.

2.20. **Education reforms are very important in bridging the skills gap**

*Pristina, March 25, 2021 –* Despite the high number of students enrolled in higher education in Kosovo, the high youth unemployment rate is an indicator that reflects a mismatch between the skills offered in the labor market, and those required by employers. Various issues that contribute to this gap, as well as opportunities to bridge it were discussed during the last virtual forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, with a panel of representatives of higher education in the country.
This forum was moderated by Vildane Kelmendi, Program Director at Cacttus, who noted that the lack of skills among young graduates takes an ever-increasing place in public discourse, and generally refers to the fact that employers in the private sector encounter difficulties in finding staff with the skills needed to perform jobs of various natures in private sector companies.

Among the panel members for this discussion was Lavon Bajrami, Dean of Enrollment at the American University RIT Kosovo, according to whom the problem of the skills gap is a multiplied problem in Kosovo, due to the fragile economy along with other challenges. Bajrami stated that in Kosovo the demands of different industries are not in sync with the skills of the workforce, but nevertheless, higher education institutions are not to be blamed, as this problem is much deeper rooted. Speaking about Kosovo’s discouraging results in PISA, Bajrami said that the country needs reforms at all levels of education, as the acquisition and development of skills begins much earlier than in higher education.

Another speaker in this discussion was the Executive Director of Universum College, Alejtin Berisha, who said that despite little progress in terms of bridging the skills gap, Kosovo has not yet reached the desired levels. According to Berisha, one of the key problems behind this is the lack of funding for education, as the share of education expenditures in relation to the country’s budget is very small, while that for research and development is non-existent. Another important point he mentioned was the transition from a system where higher education has been a privilege, to a system of massive and affordable higher education, which according to Berisha shows that expectations cannot be too high.

Whereas, the other panelist, Venera Llunji, Deputy Rector for Cooperation and International Relations at AAB College, emphasized that all levels of the education system are interconnected, and in such a situation, no level can be specifically blamed for the skills gap. She underlined the disturbing situation of education in Kosovo, noting that it has drastically dropped at every level, while citing the so-called functional illiteracy as a very negative factor, present in Kosovo. According to Llunji, it is good to have cooperation between educational institutions and businesses, in order to identify market demands and create educational programs that match them.

2.21. The pandemic creates new trends for the HORECA sector

Pristina, April 6, 2021 – Taking into account the many changes caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, reshaping the previous reality in many industries, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a virtual forum on trends in hotels, restaurants, and cafes sector (HORECA), during 2021. Through a fruitful discussion, this forum identified some of the main challenges of this sector.

This forum was moderated by Art Jashari, Marketing Project Coordinator at KFC Kosova, who said that the pandemic has caused drastic losses of human and social lives, as well as hindered the normal development of economic life by closing borders, restricting trade as well as imposing other various measures from Governments around the world.

During this discussion, the Owner of Sirius Hotel, Sami Ahmeti, claimed that the hospitality sector is one of the most damaged sectors since the outbreak of the pandemic, emphasizing that sales have fallen drastically, in contrast to costs, which have been reduced only slightly. Asked about the potential investments for the digitalization of the hotel industry, he said that at the moment the sector is struggling for survival, and something like this has made it difficult for them to embrace new trends. Ahmeti also spoke about the reduction of the value of VAT, which he considered a great help that should continue in the future as well.

Meanwhile, the board member of Sach Corporation, Flamur Breznica noted the role that the hotel, restaurants and cafes sector play in the country’s economy, saying that it is one of the most important factors of the latter. Speaking about the new trends created by the need to adapt to dealing with the pandemic, Breznica said that work has been going on for a long time in the process of digitization, which is necessary to reach a point equal to world trends.

2.22. Public and private health institutions to cooperate in digitizing healthcare
Disease prevention and effective treatment through digital technology are essential for a healthy society, especially in this time of the pandemic. Having this in consideration, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has organized a virtual forum on digital healthcare to further discuss the importance and safe environment the latter offers.

Jeta Statovci, Member of Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo, stressed that the health system must be adapted to patients’ needs. She further said that there was enough possibility for the inclusion of digital healthcare in the health system, yet it has not been done even though it was very necessary, especially in an emergency situation, such as that of the pandemic. Statovci further recommended that the state of Kosovo can implement a health information system, as in other countries, which has proved effective in this regard.

“This lack of digitalization has resulted in the lack of electronic health data for each citizen and, thus, health data of the public and private sector should be centralized, in order for the patient to have a more efficient treatment,” said Statovci.

The Executive Director of the American Hospital, Igli Larashi, considered a necessary cooperation between the public and private health sector. According to him, these patient data that would be digitized should be included in the law on personal data protection. Moreover, Larashi recommended that in order for Kosovo to have a genuine digital system, Kosovo should benefit from the experience of foreign doctors.

In addition, regarding the digital health system, Armend Vokshi, Managing Director of the American Clinic, stressed that Kosovo should not copy the system of other countries, but should adapt it to the needs of the country. Vokshi also suggested that the government should raise awareness about digital healthcare and deal with the implementation of this system. He further appealed to increase the monitoring process regarding the implementation of existing laws.

The moderator of this forum, Dorjan Berishaj, co-founder of the software company Zombie Soup, pointed out the differences between the health system in Kosovo, and in other countries, with an advanced system. He further highlighted the benefits that digital healthcare has provided in saving state budgets in treating chronic diseases. In addition, Berishaj also stressed the positive impact of virtual consultations in treating people with mental health problems as a result of the privacy provided by digital healthcare.

2.23. Interpersonal communication one of the main challenges in the development of IT companies

The development of technology has exponentially changed the way people are managed in recent years. This change, positive or negative, has pushed many companies to adapt to new approaches to technology in the field of management. With this in mind, and in order to discuss the competencies and resources needed to achieve harmony and balance between people and technology, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has organized a virtual forum on managing people in a technology-driven environment.

Astrit Leti, Chief Executive Officer at Cacttus, placed particular emphasis on having genuine managers who possess the knowledge and skills needed to interact with employees. According to him, it is this genuine interaction – which is also a challenge – between skilled managers and employees that paves the way for the company's success in providing quality products. Also, since employees are valuable assets, he stressed that in order for employees to be as productive as possible, they should be provided with training, as well as to have the mentality that the work environment, physical or remote, is not important as long as the required service is provided.

In addition, Leti was very optimistic about people thinking of switching from their current field to ICT, stressing that this is possible thanks to the ample literature that is available online. Also, given that there are 400 IT companies in Kosovo, there is an extraordinary perspective in the digitalization of local companies and in training their employees to use technology.

Furthermore, Fatos Ameti, Chief Executive Officer at Sonnecto, stressed that local ICT companies should be supported because these companies can create different platforms for the benefit of the country. Ameti also mentioned that in order to have satisfied customers, a company must invest in its workforce and its
technology. He further stressed the need to be constantly in consultation with the employee which influences the employee to express new ideas that affect the advancement of technology. This should also be accompanied by employee motivation, evaluation of their success and training. As Ameti states "when the employee is satisfied, the product will be as good as possible". Also, for anyone who wants to get involved in the field of technology, Ameti recommends firstly defining the field that a person wants to pursue, to learn and gain various national or international certifications.

Further, the Director of Business Operations at UCX, at the same time moderator of this event, Jeta Zagragia, stressed the fact that many young people in Kosovo want to get involved in the field of technology and thus have a continuous growth in their career. Zagragia also mentioned the need to keep ICT employees in the Kosovo market and the opportunity for these employees to access the foreign market.

2.24. Enforcement of intellectual property rights encourages investment

_Prishtina, April 26, 2021_ – In order to mark the World Intellectual Property Day and to discuss the importance of effective protection of intellectual property in the empowerment of small and medium enterprises, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a forum on the topic; “Intellectual Property and SMEs: Placing Ideas in the Market”, with stakeholders from the US Embassy, the private sector and relevant state institutions.

Among other things, Kujtesa Nezaj Shehu, Head of Office at SDP Kosovo, and at the same time moderator of this forum, mentioned the need to raise awareness for the protection of intellectual rights because despite the laws, their implementation still remains a problem.

Valerie Tucker, Economic and Commercial Officer at the US Embassy in Kosovo, emphasized the importance of intellectual property rights for businesses as well as the state. Tucker stressed that these rights lead to innovation, protect the consumer and attract investment in the country. She also stressed that in case of investments by a foreign investor, the protection of intellectual property rights is important, as no investor would want to get stuck in an endless legal battle.

Also, Nezir Gashi, General Director of the Agency for Industrial Property, stressed that despite the fact that the number of applications to the Agency for Industrial Property has increased over the years, it still remains at an unsatisfactory level. He also stressed that small and medium enterprises should be knowledgeable about intellectual property as businesses that protect intellectual property are more resilient to challenges.

The Head of the Sector for Intellectual Property Rights in Kosovo Customs, Sadije Topojani, stressed that the implementation of intellectual property rights contributes to creating optimal conditions for attracting foreign investment. At the same time, she mentioned the awareness messages for the citizens from the Kosovo Customs and the exposure of the counterfeit products to inform the citizens about the danger caused to them by these products.

On the other hand, Agron Selimaj, Lawyer, said that businesses are not aware of the protection of their brand, and listed the possible steps that a business can take in case of infringement of intellectual property rights.

Finally, Luljeta Plakolli Kasumi, Expert on Intellectual Property Rights, stressed the need of businesses for an intellectual property portfolio, which would serve for the prevention of intellectual property infringement and asset commercialization.

2.25. Transformation of socially-owned properties have no alternative

_Prishtina, April 27, 2021_ – Despite the shortcomings that have characterized the privatization process in the country, the transformation of social and public property into private property in Kosovo should not have an alternative, however internal inter-institutional coordination is needed, as well as with other stakeholders for possible review of privatization policies. This was said at the forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo on the Future of Privatization, with MPs, leaders of the Privatization Agency and experts on the economy.
The Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Economy, MP Ferat Shala, expressed his concerns regarding the executive interventions in the Privatization Agency of Kosovo, as an independent agency which reports to the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. He further spoke in favor of reviewing policies related to the privatization process, stressing the need for coordination with the private sector on this issue. He also said that the new government should have a clear strategy regarding the privatization of public enterprises. He said that social assets and their use should be taken into account when amending the Law on Strategic Investments. Finally, MP Shala spoke about the difficult situation of many mining assets where urgent state intervention is required.

Valon Tolaj, managing director of the Privatization Agency of Kosovo, stressed that the institution he leads is committed to completing the privatization process. According to him, this process can not be completed if there is no inter-institutional communication, including communication with the Government, municipalities, but also with the courts. Tolaj further stressed that half of the social assets have been privatized, while the value of disprivatized assets is less than the value of assets that have been transformed so far. He also noted that the AKP’s concern is also in the delays in the courts, noting that the overload of judicial contexts that make it difficult to transform socially-owned enterprises. Tolaj said that the liquidation process is a process started and its possible termination would have serious legal consequences for the Republic of Kosovo.

On the other hand, Safet Gërxhaliu, an expert on economics, stressed that the politicization of processes is slowing them down. Given that the weakest point in Kosovo is the rule of law, this consequence, according to Gërxhaliu, is being carried by the privatization process. According to him, the purpose of the privatization process was for Kosovo to have economic stability, while in fact in Kosovo there was a loss of jobs. He also stressed that the weak points of the KPA have been the lack of investment in improving the country’s image. He again stressed that the rule of law and order should be the main point and without this point he expects that the challenges in the future will be great. Speaking about the future of public enterprises, Gërxhaliu said that there should be more than one scenario proposed by the Government regarding the future of Telecom and other public enterprises, but it is important to have proposals in this regard.

2.26. American Chambers and US administration discuss economic recovery and other challenges

Prishtina, May 14, 2021 – The digital agenda of the Biden Administration, the economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the security of trade and supply chains, were the main topics discussed among senior representatives of American institutions with the American Chambers of Europe, part of which is the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

For three days in a row, the executive directors of American Chambers in Europe have met representatives of various American institutions, including Peter Harrell, Senior Director of International Economics at the White House National Security Council.

In the meeting with the representatives of the State Department, during which Ambassador Philip Reeker, Acting Assistant Secretary, also spoke up, an emphasis was placed on the transatlantic economy and the path to economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, but also on the future of transatlantic relations. In this meeting, Matt Murray, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Trade, Policy and Negotiation, Roland de Marcellus, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Finance and International Development from the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, and Ambassador Marcia Bernicat, Senior Economic Officer for Economic Growth, Energy and Environment, also spoke up.

The priorities of the Biden Administration regarding trade, economic recovery, and the future of transatlantic business were also discussed with Dale Tasharski, Acting Assistant Secretary for Global Markets and General Director of the Commercial Service at the US Department of Commerce.

In the meetings organized by the European Council of American Chambers (ECAC) with the US Administration and the United States Chamber of Commerce, were discussed, among others, the United States Plan on Climate Change and Environmental Justice, and the role of American Chambers of Europe in revitalizing transatlantic relations, advancing sustainability.
The European Council of American Chambers is an umbrella organization of 45 American Chambers founded in 1963, including the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, while in Europe, it represents the interests of 17,000 American and European companies with over 17,000 employees and $1.1 trillion investments in both continents.

2.27. **Mediation procedure the right choice to a right solution**

*Prishtina, May 19, 2021* – Mediation, a procedure that helps parties reach a compromise and deal with issues in cases or areas of weakness, and the benefits of settling. To discuss the awareness of mediation, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, jointly with USAID Commercial Justice Activity, have organized the next virtual forum, with mediators.

Yll Zekaj, the mediator, stressed that there is a difference between mediation, arbitration and court proceedings, by noting that mediation is a procedure regulated by law, which is part of the resolution of contexts alternatively, doing so, outside the court process. By using mediation as an alternative, the parties have the opportunity to resolve their disputes by engaging an impartial person, that in this case is the mediator, to facilitate the process, as the mediator’s role is to create opportunities in favor of the parties to the dispute. Zekaj further stressed the need to create an online platform, through mediation sessions, due to the pandemic situation, which have been successful.

Furthermore, mediator Mentor Hajdaraj, stressed the reasons why businesses should be in favor of mediation, as an option in resolving their contexts. He said one of the main reasons is to clarify the difference between court proceedings (formal) and the mediation process (informal). Furthermore, Hajdaraj emphasized some of the main principles, which bring benefits, where among them he mentioned the equality of the parties in mediation procedures, the will of the parties and the possibility for the parties to have control over the whole process.

2.28. **The current insolvency situation of Kosovo business after one year of COVID 19-crisis**

*Prishtina, May 19, 2021* - Deputy Minister of Justice, Nita Shala, said her opening remarks, to then leave the floor to Andres Federico Martinez, Senior Financial Sector Specialist - Debt Resolution and Insolvency, IFC/World Bank Group, who tackled the the anticipated financial distress of businesses and the steps that have been taken by developed countries topic.

Ardi Shita, Commercial Lawyer, discussed the Commencing insolvency proceedings and current insolvency legal framework, while Francika Zhitia, Judge at the Basic Court, said a word or two regarding the insolvency and rehabilitation in Kosovo during the covid-19 pandemic.

2.29. **Dialogue with Customs crucial for facilitating business operations**

*Pristina, May 20, 2021* – Customs is an important stakeholder for the private sector and business operations. With the purpose of facilitating the dialogue between private sector companies and Customs, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has organized a roundtable discussion with the new Director-General of Kosovo Customs.

Agron Llugaliu, General Director of Kosovo Customs, declared that the aim of Customs is to create conditions for equal treatment for all businesses and facilitate customs procedures through technological advancements, respectively, process automation, which provides easier communication and access for businesses in the processes developed by Customs. He further emphasized that the main assistance will be provided to the trade, manufacturing, and export sector in our country.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, said that Customs is one of the most influential institutions in the work of many companies in the country, therefore strengthening the dialogue with this institution is a constant interest of the private sector and their representatives.
Avni Krasniqi, Chairman of the Trade and Customs Committee at the American Chamber, said that, as a result of the close cooperation and ongoing dialogue with Kosovo Customs, it has become possible to continuously facilitate customs clearance procedures and other related Customs procedures, emphasizing that this institution is an example for the entire region of the Western Balkans.

Representatives of various companies who were present at the meeting raised different concerns related to the role of Customs, including issues such as the revaluation and classification of goods, treatment of parallel imports, protection of intellectual property, and also a discussion of the fight against the informal economy and smuggling.

2.30. Consideration is required for tax liabilities due to financial difficulties

Prishtina, May 25, 2021 – The impact of COVID-19 on private sector companies, as well as the implications for their tax obligations, but also the general relationship with the Tax Administration of Kosovo, were the focus of the roundtable discussion with the Director General of Tax Administration.

Arian Zeka, Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo said that the partnership of private sector representatives with the Tax Administration of Kosovo is crucial for the operations of private sector enterprises. He also added that the role of TAK is key in managing tax liabilities after financial difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The General Director of the Tax Administration of Kosovo, Ilir Murtezaj spoke about the role that TAK has played during the pandemic in support of the operation of businesses, emphasizing the call of this institution to apply for tax debt forgiveness. Murtezaj also spoke about the need to strengthen cooperation with private enterprises to fight the informal economy. He then thanked the American Chamber of Commerce for the constructive partnership.

In addition, Ardiana Bunjaku, treasurer of the Board of Governors of the American Chamber of Commerce, and director of the Association of Certified Accountants and Auditors of Kosovo praised the Tax Administration for the work done in advancing the electronic tax return system, however, she expressed concern about the process of reviewing tax policies, both in terms of time, but also the preliminary clarification of possible changes.

Gresë Rexhepi, chairwoman of the American Chamber of Commerce Tax Committee also spoke about the importance of digitalization of tax processes, which has increased the efficiency of tax filing and payment as well as increased overall transparency. She said that together with the members of the American Chamber they have prepared recommendations for fiscal policies related to the post-pandemic period, along with other general recommendations.

The current representatives of businesses raised issues related to the functioning of the Tax Administration systems, but also to the blocking of their bank accounts during the tax period, calling for consideration by state institutions due to the difficulties they face for months now.

2.31. The American Chamber of Commerce presents the findings of the 2021 Manufacturing Competitiveness Index

Pristina, 26 May 2021 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo published today the findings of the 2021 Manufacturing Competitiveness Index, which reflects the state of the manufacturing sector according to various indicators. According to this year’s Index, indicators related to the ease of international trade are rated highest with an average of 5.61 points, while indicators related to the rule of law are rated the lowest with an average of 4.19 points.

Arian Zeka, Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce said that there cannot exist a sustainable economic development without strengthening the manufacturing sector, emphasizing that this has been at the core of institutional efforts in recent years, including the New Government of the Republic of Kosovo. Elaborating on the research findings, Zeka said that reforms should focus on improving specific indicators that have been ranked lower this year, such as those related to the rule of law, access to finance,
internal trade, building quality infrastructure, but also the fiscal environment, labor force and physical infrastructure.

The Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, Rozeta Hajdari, said that the Government plans to support the manufacturing industry, through the advancement of policies that enable increased competitiveness and exports. Minister Hajdari said that the focus of the Ministry she leads will be the improvement of the quality infrastructure framework, which among other factors, would guarantee greater protection for local consumers. The Minister also discussed the support for businesses with potential for export and creation of new jobs, through the creation of specific policies catered for industry, export and trade, which will be preceded by an analysis for industrial sectors. Discussing the different indicators that were demonstrated in the Index prepared by the American Chamber of Commerce, Minister Hajdari presented the Government’s intentions to establish a Commercial Court, improve the link between the educational institutions and labor market demands, and strengthen economic diplomacy.

On the other hand, Skender Rama, USAID Compete Program Leader spoke about the components of the project he leads and the industrial sectors that will be supported and prioritized by this program. As a result, it will facilitate different industrial sectors including the food processing sectors, the woodworking and information technology sector. Rama stressed that among other things, the program he leads includes cooperation with educational institutions and the private sector in terms of skilled workers, but also improves access to finance through the introduction of new financial products, such as export financing, with which The USAID Compete project also collaborates with the American Chamber of Commerce.

Teuta Kurshumlija from Stone Castle spoke about the concerns of the private sector, thus emphasizing the lack of manpower. Kurshumlija cited the aspect of late payments as a negative indicator in the development of private sector businesses and called for the intensification of awareness campaigns on the consumption of local products.

The Manufacturing Competitiveness Index for 2021 is the second annual survey of the American Chamber of Commerce after the first publication in 2019, measuring the perception of manufacturing enterprises in all major regions of Kosovo along with the various indicators of business operation. Based on the findings of the 2021 Index, the need for increased efforts to improve labor-related indicators such as the ability to find agile, skilled, and productive labor, as well as the link between education and the labor market, is emphasized, but also indicators related to access to finance, rule of law and quality infrastructure are necessary.

2.32. Deputy Assistant Secretary Palmer visits the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo

Prishtina, May 31, 2021 – U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary, Matthew Palmer, and U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Philip Kosnett, visited the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo to meet and discuss with the leadership and member companies of the organization.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Palmer expressed his understanding of the role AmChams across the region, and in this particular case AmCham Kosovo plays, providing a solid foundation for the relationship between the two countries, the United States and Kosovo. He thanked AmCham for promoting the economic partnership between the two countries, and in helping create opportunity for American business to invest in Kosovo and for Kosovo businesses to invest in the United States, adding that the network of AmChams across the region is a hugely positive, productive, and influential framework to deal with the current challenges the region faces.

Mr. Palmer wanted to hear from AmCham members on the local business climate and regional business climate, which are things high on U.S. agenda to promote regional economic integration, with an idea to lower barriers to trade, to lower barriers to economic integration and movement of people and capital, evaluating them as a framework for Kosovo to integrate into the European system, ideally as a member of the European Union, which is also a goal and objective of the United States for Kosovo’s future. He also said that a comprehensive agreement on the normalization of the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia is key to attracting more U.S. and other foreign investments and creating the much-needed jobs for Kosovo and other people of the region. Representatives of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo spoke about the importance of a stronger dialogue between the Government of Kosovo and the private sector, but
also on the advancement of regional economic cooperation, development of energy capacities and workforce training.

2.33. **Proper spatial planning is key to sustainable economic development**

*Prishtinë, June 2, 2021* – To discuss the significance of spatial planning in economic development and growth, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has organized a discussion with the Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Liburn Aliu.

Arian Zeka, the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce, said that spatial planning is closely related to economic development, emphasizing the purpose of this discussion with the Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Liburn Aliu. Zeka stressed the importance of legalizing illegally constructed buildings, the Ministry’s plans to raise public awareness regarding the application process, and also alternative scenarios possible after the expiration of the application period for legalization, as this topic is closely related to the issue of economic development.

The Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Liburn Aliu, emphasized that he is happy about the opportunity to discuss with private enterprises and establish cooperation with private sector representatives, with the main goal of achieving sustainable economic development that respects spatial planning as well as the requirements for environmental protection. Minister Aliu further stated that the problem for the Ministry that he leads is the issue of expropriation, both at the local and central levels.

Minister Aliu put special emphasis on the issue of legalization, stressing the need for a continuous campaign to raise the citizen’s awareness, but also that of the businesses, whilst underlining the contribution that chambers of commerce can make in this aspect.

2.34. **Despite the pandemic, Kosovar enterprises are responsible in social aspect**

*Prishtina, June 15, 2021* – The impact of the pandemic on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities has been significantly high. To discuss in detail about this topic, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has organized its upcoming event with private sector stakeholders.

Afrika Zyferi, the public relations expert at IPKO, stressed that the company in question was one of the pillar industries during the pandemic period. The activities carried out by IPKO during this period have been mostly online, including entertainment activities and numerous requests for communication. Zyferi further said that the key priority has been the well-being of staff and clients, as well as, the provision of working conditions from home, “one of the activities that should be mentioned is the development of applications for online payments,” she said.

KEDS Communications Manager, Linda Gjokaj said that the pandemic has changed the company’s operating system. She further said that 80% of KEDS employees have been in the field and that all strategies had to be implemented in a completely different way. Gjokaj further emphasized that KEDS ACADEMY, a project which was constantly active, during the pandemic completely changed its strategy, switching to online learning. Despite the great challenges, the effect of this academy was tremendous with a fruitful outcome on the part of the company and the students.

Njomza Rozhaja, unit manager at BKT, also the moderator of this event, stressed that BKT has been very engaged with many different activities, especially those of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Rozhaja spoke in particular about the support given to associations in need, mainly those of children.

Present business representatives raised issues related to the difficulties encountered during the pandemic period mainly emphasizing staff well-being, communication and moral support. Without leaving behind the activities of corporate social responsibility, starting from the provision of online products, with a focus on E-commerce.

2.35. **Senator Ernst meets a delegation of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo**
Pristina, July 5, 2021 – In her recent visit to Kosovo, United States Senator Joni Ernst, from the State of Iowa, met with business representatives of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

Senator Ernst said that she was happy to be back in Kosovo and to discuss with Kosovo officials how the United States can be supportive, but also how Iowa can expand its role in Kosovo through the long-standing Kosovo-Iowa partnership. Ernst said she hoped the partnership could move beyond the already strong military cooperation and expand further in education, business development, and agriculture.

“There are concrete ways of furthering economic development and supporting business in Kosovo. It is important to target the areas with the greatest opportunities for expanded Iowa-Kosovo cooperation, such as agriculture,” Senator Ernst said.

Speaking on workforce development, she highlighted the importance of apprenticeship programs for young people, as an alternative to university degrees, noting the success of such programs in Iowa. Ernst emphasized how these programs prepare young people for the labor market by better matching skills development to the needs of employers.

Regarding the investment climate in Kosovo, Senator Ernst said that many people would be willing to invest and engage in Kosovo, but investors need the reassurance of a strong legal system backed by demonstrated respect for the rule of law.

2.36. Minister Murati committed for coordination with the private sector on fiscal issues

Prishtina, July 14, 2021 - The continuation of support measures under the new economic recovery package for enterprises affected by the COVID19 pandemic, the possible review of tax policies and the fight against the informal economy were the main issues discussed today at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo forum with the Minister of Finance, Labor and Transfers Hekuran Murati.

Minister Hekuran Murati said that any review of tax policies will be done in close coordination with the private sector, while a possible decision will follow a thorough analysis of all sectors of the economy.

In this regard, Minister Murati said that the Ministry is making efforts to have a clear picture of the economy in Kosovo, in order to launch a formalization campaign for all sectors. In this way, the Ministry will try to review the requests and needs of businesses and in the long run to intervene where necessary. The Minister stressed that tax policies in Kosovo are well consolidated but nevertheless there are some areas that require adjustment which may also affect the increase of budget revenue collection.

The Ministry will provide a favorable environment for doing business and investing in the country, because as Minister Murati stressed, the Government should be at the service of the private sector and society in general. He also clarified about the plans of the Ministry for the implementation of support measures within the new package of economic revival announced by the Government, especially for the production sector.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo asked Minister Murati to avoid the possibility of imposing new taxes or raising existing tax rates, while there is a real possibility of collecting more budget revenues by combating the informal economy.

Representatives of AmCham member companies expressed their concerns about the high presence of informal activities, as well as the need to increase integrity and accountability within the country's tax institutions.

2.37. Educational curriculum should reflect the changing needs of the private sector

Prishtina, August 18, 2021 – The need to adapt the curricula of formal and vocational education institutions to the needs of the business community was the topic of discussion at the Shifting Curricula Roundtable, organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Dukagjin Pupovci said that it is quite understandable that the business community requires that the skills of the workforce be in line with their needs. He said that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is in the process of drafting a new
Education Strategy. He said that the new Kosovo curriculum has started to be fully implemented in all schools in Kosovo since 2017, and focuses on six main competencies: competence of communication and expression, the competence of thinking, the competence of learning, competencies for life, work, and environment, as well as personal and civic competencies. He said that in the process of drafting new legislation, new strategy, but also new curricula, the role of the business community is very important, by inviting business representatives to give their contribution in this regard, their requests and proposals should be reflected in the documents aimed at reforming the education system.

Arianit Fazliu from the company KUTIA, which operates in the information technology sector, said that curricula should be seen as living projects and not as products that are created for a certain time. This way, they would adapt to the rapidly changing needs of businesses and consequently the labor market. He also spoke about the importance of including certain subjects such as coding in the early grades of primary school. Fazliu said that in addition to adopting the right curricula, it is important to adopt the right teaching methodology, but also the right training of teachers.

On the other hand, Jeton Veseli from the company FRONT, which operates in the construction sector, said that a better connection is needed with students of technical professional directions with the construction sector in particular and other sectors in general. Through this, students will have the opportunity to see the practical and technological aspects of the theoretical lessons they receive in schools or vocational training centers. He said the Government should provide fiscal or monetary incentives to companies that would be interested in opening their doors to apprentices or students.

Forum participants raised their concerns about the availability of a skilled workforce, the need to change the approach to teaching, but also the role of state institutions for the quality of education.

2.38. Full implementation of fiscalization helps fight the informal economy

Pristina, September 7, 2021 – Completing the fiscalization process and monitoring its implementation is an important process in combating the informal economy and creating a level playing field for all companies. This was said during a joint forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce with the Director General of the Tax Administration of Kosovo and business representatives.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka said that it is worrying that a large number of businesses continue to be tax-free despite the process beginning a long time ago. He also said that the informal economy has grown since the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic, while increasing fiscalization and consequently fighting the informal economy are important for creating conditions for a level playing field in the market.

The President of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce Berat Rukiqi stressed that members of business organizations constantly seek to address the issue of informality. He also added that the informal economy harms a healthy economy, so there should be cooperation between institutions, businesses and citizens to fight the informal economy.

The General Director of the Tax Administration of Kosovo, Ilir Murtezaj said that this is a critical topic for every country and not only for Kosovo. He added that the informal economy is a type of cancer for a healthy economy that is negatively affecting many industries as well as competition in the country. Over the last three years TAK has had support from international organizations to help with measuring the regular economy. TAK constantly requires businesses to meet tax obligations and works to raise awareness of the fulfillment of these obligations by businesses. During the pandemic TAK has seen large increases in fines and punitive measures for businesses, because of this TAK has proposed new measures to raise awareness. TAK is looking for the most efficient way to proceed towards fiscalization. Ilir Murtezaj stressed that there should be cooperation between TAK, businesses and citizens, to consolidate the fiscalization process. He appealed to citizens to always ask for the fiscal coupon to aid in this process.

Ruzhdi Zenelaj from Deloitte said that it is important to work on building the human and professional capacity of TAK to oversee the process of fiscalization and implementation of tax legislation in general.
Driton Krasniqi from the company Emona Group said that informality causes a lot of damage to businesses and that the reason for informality can be found in many areas of the economy. He added that small businesses tend to not declare due to a small foreseen profit that causes a lot of losses for the business in the long run as well as losses for the economy. He said informality has become a culture whereby businesses avoid tax obligations though there are more benefits from declaring and removing informality.

Valon Jahaj from the Association of Authorized Operators for Fiscal Equipment said that according to data from the Ministry of Finance it is estimated that over 10,000 companies are unfiscalized, while adding that recently there has been an increase in the number of companies providing fiscal equipment, but also attractive offers for non-fiscalized enterprises for equipment with cash registers.

Forum participants raised their concerns about the lack of information regarding the informal economy and the implementation of fiscalization.

2.39. EU special representative Lajcak meets Kosovo’s private sector representatives

Pristina, September 16, 2021 – The business community is very important for political and public stability, businesses in Kosovo share the desire to move forward and away from the status quo. Regional economic cooperation can greatly improve the current economic situation in the country. This was said during the meeting with the European Union Delegate for the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, Miroslav Lajcak with Kosovo’s private sector representatives.

EU Special Representative for the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues, Miroslav Lajcak stated that the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue has led to many benefits in terms of the economy and trade in Kosovo. According to Lajcak the dialogue has allowed Kosovo to exercise greater control over its borders, whilst also effectively collecting tariffs. In the first month of 2021 alone, there has been a 25% increase in revenues from trade in Kosovo, said Lajcak. Furthermore, Lačak raised the case of Kosovo’s own dialing code which means we do not have to pay Slovenia to use their code as well as establishing our own energy control which enables Kosovo to collect transit fees.

The business community present, including the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, and Armend Malazogu from Cactus, expressed their support for the dialogue moving forward to enable economic cooperation in the region. Free regional cooperation, as expressed by the participants, is one of the main ways to attract foreign direct investment. Kosovo faces many challenges ahead, one of them being barriers to trade. Moreover, the importance of free movement of people, services and goods was emphasized in the meeting.

Concern over Kosovo remaining isolated and not cooperating with the region was also stated in the meeting. Whilst the dialogue has generated many benefits, there were reservations conveyed by the participants that the dialogue can sometimes become a disguise for not addressing the real issues that Kosovo faces such as the less than willing Serbian representatives and the unfair treatment of Kosovo by the European Union.

Lajcak expressed his readiness to address all the concerns voiced during the meeting. He explained that a pragmatic approach to adequately address the concerns is through the dialogue thus stressing the significance of the support from the business community for the dialogue.

2.40. E-commerce in Kosovo with continuous growth

Pristina, September 17, 2021 – Whilst the e-commerce industry faces a lot of challenges pertaining to customer service, sales, and the legal climate, it is an ever-growing industry in Kosovo with a lot of potential to become the new normal of sales. This was said during the roundtable discussion on E-commerce trends in Kosovo from the outbreak of COVID19 and on and the readiness of businesses for the 4th Quarter sales organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

Valon Canhasi from the company Hallakate began the discussion by stating that E-commerce is the future. Canhasi continued that buying online is slowly becoming the new normal with online sales doubling very quickly. According to Canhasi e-commerce has thrived in the last years in Kosovo and has created a healthy competition in the industry which is continuously growing.
Mergim Cahani from Gjirafa50 agreed that COVID19 has affected most businesses but that businesses have tried to adapt nonetheless to the difficult situation. He added that resources had to be stretched quite a bit during the pandemic, however it is something that could be overcome. With regard to the 4th quarter sales, Cahani stated that preparation for these sales is incredibly tricky, especially during Black Friday. There are challenges such as the significant increase in demand paired with stock and labor availability, this as well as transaction processing problems due to the high demand are challenges which a business cannot prepare for beforehand. However, Gjirafa50 has been working continuously to prepare for the 4th quarter sales this year.

Genta Brestovci from EBAA declared that EBAA did not face the heightened concerns during the COVID19 pandemic due to their cooperation with ELKOS which enabled them to continue business almost as normal. Trends observed during the pandemic have been the increasing card payments and purchasing trends which shifted from luxuries to necessities such as food and hygiene products, said Brestovci.

Ideal Shala from the company Egieta raised that there were a lot of challenges during the pandemic COVID19 when it came to e-commerce and online sales, especially being a new company in the industry. He held that success is not immediate in e-commerce as one of the biggest challenges businesses face is the lack of liquidity. Another problem that has been noted is the hesitation of importers and retailers to cooperate with e-commerce as it is seen as a great risk, heightened by the COVID19 pandemic.

Urim Vokshi Lawyer at Vokshi & Lata Lawfirm offered his legal opinion on the legal climate surrounding e-commerce in Kosovo. He raised his concern over the collision of legislation surrounding e-commerce and the non-compliance of various legislations in the industry. He stated that laws and legislations come from the needs of citizens, and although there are laws on e-commerce the aforementioned challenges make it difficult for businesses to implement them. He continued by saying that it is crucial that laws on e-commerce protect customers from fraudulent business practices and vice-versa.

2.41. Kosovo with numerous advantages for USA companies aiming to outsource business processes

Pristina, September 23, 2021 – The young population, as the most important asset of Kosovo, the knowledge in the field of information technology and mastery of several foreign languages, are among the most important factors that make Kosovo a suitable place to outsource business processes in Kosovo by American, and other international companies. The increase in the number of companies that specialize in such services and the export of these services to the United States of America and Europe, have influenced Kosovo to record a positive balance of payments when it comes to services, however, state support is needed for the promotion of this industry, as well as its further development. This was said during a roundtable discussion organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo on “Why outsource in Kosovo?”

The moderator of this event, Fatos Ameti from Sonnecto said that many Kosovar companies have managed to reach partnership agreements with American companies and other international companies, offering various services to them from Kosovo. This has become possible due to the workforce that Kosovo offers in the field of information technology, and also to the high level of people speaking English and other foreign languages.

Ersan Ismaili from Converged Communications, said their team has provided services mainly in the telecommunications sector to local and international companies, including software development, customer relationship management programs, billing and integration with various platforms. He spoke about the company’s experience in providing services to one of the largest American companies in California. He spoke about increased efficiency of companies which have outsourced business processes from the company in Kosovo. He stressed the need for training of the workforce in Kosovo in response to the growing demand for such profiles from Kosovar companies that provide such services, emphasizing as positive the establishment of vocational training institutions in the field of information technology.

Fitim Konjusha from Quantech spoke about his company’s experiences in providing contracting services to foreign companies. He said that the very high level of English language proficiency by the youth of Kosovo is a great advantage, given the bad experiences that American and other international companies have with
unsatisfactory linguistic level in Asian countries. He also said that the cost of providing such services in Kosovo along with the high level of professionalism of services that can be contracted in Kosovo by international companies are a guarantee of strengthening this industry in the future.

The participants in this forum offered their recommendations regarding the need for greater promotion by state institutions for enterprises of this industry, but also for the need of institutional support for this sector, knowing the contribution that this sector gives to the employment of youth, but also the general economic development of Kosovo.

2.42. The increase in the use of mediation for resolving commercial disputes

Prishtina, September 25, 2021 – In order to facilitate the development of doing business, to increase efficiency in resolving disputes in the courts, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, jointly with the USAID Commercial Justice Activity, within the mediation week has held a roundtable discussion on Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism: Mediation with stakeholders from the Institutions of the Republic of Kosovo.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka said that in September 2021, exactly 10 years have passed since institutionalized arbitration and mediation were introduced in Kosovo, with great help, even at that time from the previous programs, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Zeka said that a decade later, there is still work to be done in promoting arbitration and mediation, despite the continued increase in the use by businesses of dispute resolution mechanisms.

Nita Shala, Deputy Minister of Justice said that the Ministry is committed to improving access to justice for businesses and citizens. She said the willingness to empower the liberal professions and the services provided by the liberal professions, including mediation, is one of the key issues the latter is working on. Shala further said that mediation would help businesses and citizens to relieve the judiciary of this burden and would guarantee the party a much faster and more efficient process in resolving the dispute.

"The Ministry of Justice is completing the current legal framework for regulating mediation. With the help of the USAID Commercial Justice Activity, we have finalized two very important draft administrative instructions, which regulate the issue of mediator fees and the issue of cases of self-initiation and referral by administrative bodies," said Shala.

Chief of Party, USAID Commercial Justice Activity Chris Thompson said Mediation Week is an important opportunity for Kosovo businesses to understand its importance as a dispute resolution mechanism. He said mediation takes much less of the time to resolve disputes, while the independent mediator enables an agreement to be reached by listening to both parties. Thompson noted that statistics on the use of mediation as a means of resolving disputes show a steady increase, adding that the USAID CJA is promoting mediation and raising the awareness of businesses and citizens, working with the Ministry of Justice to improve the regulatory environment, as well as with the Courts in referring and identifying suitable mediation cases. He encouraged businesses to analyze the official AmCham website to learn more about mediation and arbitration processes.

The President of Prishtina Basic Court Albina Shabani Rama said that the dynamics of economic and social developments have increased the level of disputes, while the parties usually prefer to resolve these disputes through formal court proceedings, although this is not the most efficient procedure in most of the cases. She further added that the Court has an important role in promoting the mediation procedure as it refers the parties to the mediation procedure, almost for all civil, family, economic disputes, but also criminal offenses punishable by up to three years. President Shabani Rama, at the end of the forum, said that there is a need to raise awareness regarding the importance and efficiency of mediation as an alternative procedure for alternative dispute resolution.

Through the video link, Pete Swanson from the Federal Mediation and Reconciliation Service (FMRS) in the United States of America spoke about strengthening the professional mediation capacity in the Republic of Kosovo as one of the main components of the project. He added that the project will work intensively with fifteen mediators over the coming years, training them to operate in accordance with US federal agency standards, and also aims to train these mediators to train other mediators in Kosovo. He also said that FMRS
will work with the USAID Commercial Justice Activity to promote the use of mediation, as mediation works in all countries of the world and, as such, should function in Kosovo.

Ylli Zekaj, the licensed mediator, said that the short duration of the mediation procedure is one of the most favorable aspects for businesses to resolve their disputes, as is the aspect of financial costs, which are relatively low. He said that 90% of disputes that are intended to be resolved through mediation are successful, thus alluding to the high efficiency of mediation as an alternative method of resolving disputes. He said that even if the mediation does not succeed, the parties still enjoy the opportunity to bring the same dispute to court.

2.43. State institutions to support the manufacturing industry hit by the pandemic

Prishtina, September 28, 2021 – Kosovo has invested a lot in technology and product quality, while an advantage in the post-pandemic period has been the decline in imports, which has increased sales of domestic products, on the other hand, the manufacturing sector has been lacking in state support. This was said during the discussion at the forum on Post-pandemic Manufacturing Trends in Kosovo organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

Argëzon Havollì from Pi & Ki, part of ELKOS corporation, said that in terms of supplies, there has been a tendency to increase product and transport prices. The increase in demand has also affected the increase in prices of final products. According to Havollì, the production situation after the pandemic has been very difficult for the manufacturing industry, while high supply prices, delays in transport and lack of labor have caused many problems with supply, however, according to him the situation has already stabilized. He further said that the Government should treat manufacturing as a serious industry, since Kosovo has great competition in the region and beyond.

Kreshnik Jakupaj from the company Medruplast said that since the outbreak of the pandemic, the biggest problems have been related to the supply of products, as well as the longer transport time that has caused these delays. He said the other problem was related to labor shortage, adding that the reliance on stocks and supplies from the region have avoided these difficulties. He further said that another problem was the increase in prices of raw materials by 20-30%. Despite this, he mentioned the investment in advanced technology and renewable energy sources, which have impacted the increasing efficiency.

Ruzhdi Haxhijaha from Bodrumi i Vjetër stated that the year 2020, respectively the period after the outbreak of the pandemic, has faced the winery industry with a decline in domestic and international market, for which the company had to reduce prices in order of maintaining market share. He said that the Government should do more to support manufacturing enterprises, as a pillar of sustainable economic development.

The panelists concluded by agreeing that it is important to conduct a study of the problems of producers in Kosovo and to create a plan for solving their problems in particular, as well as accelerating economic development in general. They stressed that the Government should create more favorable conditions and ease the burden through financial support for companies that have suffered heavy losses.

2.44. Comprehensive commitment is needed to address the labor force gap

Prishtina, September 29, 2021 – Regional migration trends, the COVID19 pandemic, and the impact of remittances appear to be some of the factors influencing labor force shortages in Kosovo, whereas recommendations on how to overcome this issue were the focus of a forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo with representatives of various industries.

Meridian Corporation Board Chairman Hakif Gashi said that while in recent years the unskilled workforce has been a concern, companies are facing new labor constraints, such as a lack of interest in working in the private sector, as well as a low level of commitment. He suggested that educational institutions focus on the proper qualification of the workforce, by addressing the needs of private sector enterprises, including a greater focus on internships.

The commitment of employees as an issue was also emphasized by Jeta Zagragja, from the company UCX, that operates in the ICT industry. She said that the limited pool of professionals in the area of information
technology, as well as the ever increasing number of companies in this industry, has affected the frequent turnover of staff, which results in higher wages. While a large number of companies have reached agreements for provision of services to companies in US and Europe, due to the labor costs, the continuous raising of salaries, may affect the loss of competitive advantages of Kosovar companies in this industry.

Drin Haraçia from the Kosovo Employment Agency spoke about the activities of the organization he leads in liaising between jobseekers and employers. He shared the concerns of the representatives of the private sector regarding the lack of manpower, emphasizing that the same complaints have been received from employers who have sought services from the Agency. However, he said that there is a need to improve the labor offer, in terms of working conditions, such as compliance with legal provisions governing working hours, holidays and public holidays, which are reported as a reason by a number of jobseekers after they have quit their working relationship. Haraçia also spoke about the numerous training offered by the Agency through the Regional Employment Centers, for labor qualification and shortages, in response to the demands of employers. He invited AmCham and its member companies to address their needs and ideas regarding better supply and demand linkages in the labor market.

Visar Idrizi, from Vi-Print company, said that the difficulties in securing the workforce have prompted him to find new solutions. He shared his experience in hiring workers from Asian countries where there is a larger supply of labor, for which he is so far extremely satisfied. He said that based on this, he has decided to use his experience to help other companies, for which the workforce has become a problem for growth and development. He said the state should provide flexible labor legislation, including more liberal procedures for hiring foreign labor, as otherwise jeopardizing the growth of domestic companies, their penetration into international markets, and the overall development of the country.

2.45. AmCham discusses potentials of renewable energy

Pristina, September 30, 2021 – Kosovo faces several challenges regarding the development of renewable energy. The challenges of developing renewable energy projects are of a strategic nature, because Kosovo is still not clear on how it wants to develop the renewable energy sector. This has been stated during the panel discussion on Accelerating renewable energy investments: Challenges and Opportunities organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

Guri Shkodra, from the company SOWI, also the moderator of the event, expressed his concern over the challenges of developing renewable energy projects in the country, adding that as individuals in Kosovo, we spend about 200Kw of energy in the country, while the average consumption in the world is around 8000Kw. Thus, Kosovo faces many challenges in terms of electricity supply, a challenge that will increase due to the current situation and the pandemic situation where the demand for electricity consumption has increased by 27%.

Lekë Batalli from USAID’s Sustainable Energy Program in Kosovo said that the main objective of this project is to ensure investment in electricity by focusing on a good legislative and regulatory framework that will attract a large number of investments. This will be done through the cooperation of the public and private sector where the Sustainable Energy Program in Kosovo will serve as a bridge between the private and public sector. Furthermore, Batalli said that what investors want is a legal and regulatory framework as well as trust in public institutions, something that is possible because Kosovo operates on the legal basis of the European Union with which foreign investors are familiar. One problem identified by Batalli in the electricity sector is the setting of targets for strategic documents that are currently being drafted.

Lulzim Syla from the company Elen GmbH emphasized that the electricity sector has encountered problems due to the political instability in the country that has limited the development of this sector. Despite this, Syla said that the potential of solar and renewable energy in Kosovo is very large, and the interest of companies to invest in solar energy in particular is growing. One of the reasons why companies may be reluctant to invest is the difficulty of securing financing for these projects, but this is something that can be addressed through consumer self-sustainability, which gives room for auctions for larger projects that attract investors.
Kosovo offers many potentials for foreign investors, but they need to be better promoted

Pristina, October 5, 2021 – Kosovo offers many potentials for attracting foreign investment, but better promotion is needed as well as addressing some issues such as bureaucracy, perception of corruption and contract enforcement, for greater results in increasing foreign investment inflows in the country. This was said during a forum on Case for Investing in Kosovo, organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, in which representatives of the Government, the U.S. Embassy and representatives of private companies spoke.

The Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, Rozeta Hajdari said that Kosovo stands very well in many aspects which are important for attracting foreign investment such as labor capital and tax rates.

She also said that the culture of doing business in Kosovo is close to that of Western countries, assessing this as an important element in Kosovo’s offer to foreign investors. She said that Kosovo offers many advantages for foreign companies for offshoring services. She spoke about the importance of a favorable tax system, but also the fact that Kosovo uses the euro as the official currency, which avoids foreign exchange risk.

She emphasized that many European businesses have expressed their interest in establishing their production activities in Kosovo, thus offering the possibility of training the workforce in the area of production and processing. She said that the focus of the Ministry she leads is the functionalization of economic zones, transforming them into functioning ecosystems, by introducing modern management models.

Dillon Green, Economic and Commercial Officer at U.S. Embassy in Pristina, said that Kosovo has a strategic geographical location, as well as preferential trade access to the European Union, a good labor market, but also a society which is welcoming and open for the United States in general, and American businesses in particular.

He said that whenever American businesses visit Kosovo, they are positively surprised by what Kosovo has to offer, so it is important to ensure as many such visits as possible. He said that Kosovo definitely has a case for investing, highlighting Kosovo’s young and multilingual population, but also a good corporate tax regime. He emphasized the need for greater focus on the Kosovo diaspora, whereas in terms of promoting investment potentials, especially in the United States, he said that one should select states that have some prior knowledge of Kosovo, such as the state of Iowa. He said that in Kosovo there is a high perception of corruption, but there is still a big gap between perception and real corruption.

Afrore Rudi, a partner at Deloitte, said that Kosovo has an affordable tax system, but should think about introducing further tax facilities, such as tax breaks provided by law, but for which the secondary legal basis has never been regulated. She emphasized that these pose one of the important aspects for which foreign investors are interested in. Speaking about the importance of proper fiscal policies, Rudi also stressed the need to address the issue of losses faced by almost all companies. She also spoke about the importance of shifting the sectors in which Kosovo attracts foreign investment, knowing how many years now the real estate sector dominates.

Joining the event through the video link from the United States of America, the Managing Director of Crimson Capital, Michael Gold, spoke about the most important human resource that Kosovo has, which are creative and energetic people. He also spoke about the strong financial sector, which has an important role in sustainable economic development, but also about the Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund, which is one of the best mechanisms with such a function in the region. He spoke about several sectors, such as the wood and metal processing sectors, which when combined with the creativity of Kosovars, enable original designs that can be easily exported to other countries.

The financial expert, Ramis Ahmetaj, said that Kosovo has a young population, a suitable tax system, as well as a suitable geographical position, therefore coordinated efforts are needed to attract investments. He talked about three important factors that influence the decision of investors: market size, efficiency of operation and natural resources. He shared the opinion with the speakers that there is a big gap between the perception of corruption and corruption. Speaking about the importance of the diaspora, he said that
the Kosovar diaspora is strong and has abilities to invest, however they should be convinced about the investment potentials, since only the patriotic aspect is not sufficient.

2.47. Open Procurement and Red Flags

_Pristina, October 6, 2021_ – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in cooperation with the FOL Movement and with the support of the USAID Transparent, Effective and Accountable Municipalities Program held an informative session on Open Procurement Portal and Red Flags.

The purpose of the event was to inform and talk with business representatives, regarding public procurement in Kosovo, open data, as well as the platforms that provide these data, such as Open Procurement Portal and the Red Flags.

This informative session enabled the promotion of the aforementioned platforms and for the promotion of research of public contracts by Kosovar businesses.

This activity was supported by the USAID Transparent, Effective, and Accountable Municipalities Program.

2.48. Minister Peci presents state plans for the development of agriculture

_Pristina, October 7, 2021_ – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized the forum “State Policies for Agricultural Development” in which panel participated the Minister of Agriculture, Faton Peci, together with Sead Shehu from M & Sillosi and Agran Halimi from Pestova, moderated by Fatmir Selimi, the consultant.

Minister Peci spoke to the participants regarding the agricultural policies of the Government of Kosovo, saying that during this mandate, the Ministry will be committed to creating favorable conditions for the development of agricultural activities through state mechanisms, advancement of current legislation, and appropriate development policies, to further advance the agricultural sector, as a future priority for the economic development of the country.

“The support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development through programs and policies for local farmers and producers will continue, contributing to the increased production and quality for all domestic products. Also, during this year I have undertaken concrete actions to address the Auditor’s recommendations regarding the drafting of criteria and budget planning for the Direct Payments Program “, said Minister Peci.

He has also shown that through support programs he is creating new support opportunities for applicant farmers. “In the framework of this year's support program, we have increased support for vegetables, and we have taken actions that orient subsidies on the basis of yield. Meanwhile, another innovation of this program is the coverage of the Insurance Premium in the amount of 75 percent for 6 agricultural crops for farmers who decide to provide agricultural crops “, said among others Minister Peci.

Minister Peci invited the representatives of the companies present at the forum to present their concerns with Minister Peci, who expressed the willingness and readiness to address the concerns and barriers faced by the latter, based on applicable laws.

2.49. Emotional Intelligence in the workplace

_Pristina, October 12, 2021_ – The training was delivered by Anita Kosumi Ajeti, Head of Human Resources Department, BPB Bank, during which she tackled the issues on the concept of Emotional Intelligence, the importance of Emotional Intelligence in the modern workplace, the impact of Emotional Intelligence on Leadership Effectiveness, as well as the HR’s role on empowering the importance of Emotional Intelligence.
2.50. The transformation driven by the COVID19 pandemic has changed the demand for funding

Prishtina, October 14, 2021 – The outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic has created new economic circumstances affecting the transformation of businesses and the increase of digitalization. This has undoubtedly affected the requests for financing, as well as the lending trends from financial institutions, such as local commercial banks or international institutions. This was said at a roundtable organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

At the opening of the forum, Majlinda Aliu, journalist, at the same time the moderator of the panel, said that the pandemic has affected a huge reshuffle within companies in general, causing many companies to redesign their operations, change the approach and focus more on digitalization. This of course has increased the demand for capital, she said.

Visar Perani from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) said that the focus of the organization in which he works is the private sector. He said that the negative impacts of the pandemic on the enterprise have caused the demand for financing of new projects to decline from March 2020, also due to the increased care of companies in Kosovo for new investments in circumstances of uncertainty related to the pandemic. However, he said the demand has started to increase slightly in the first quarter of 2021. He spoke about the increase in exports of products from Kosovo that have occurred in recent years, suggesting companies focus on such products and services, which can be more easily funded by both the IFC and other institutions. Perani stressed the need to improve corporate governance in large companies, which among other things would help access in large markets.

Leonora Kusari from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development said that, in 2020, there was an increase in demand by 35% compared to the previous year, while this year there was an increase in demand by 50% and this request for support has mainly included the redesign of business, reorganization of enterprises. In addition, another increased demand has been the support for software solutions, respectively the increase of digitalization, which includes the transition of business sales to electronic commerce. She said that the EBRD instruments are mainly for financing investment projects. She said that EBRD has created a "REBOOT" program to support companies in the recovery process, through advice, but also in raising the quality of products that meet European standards.

On the other hand, representing the commercial banking sector, Muharrem Inan from Banka Kombetare Tregtare said that, last year, the bank’s focus was on supporting customers who were in survival mode, while this year Kosovo’s economy has performed much better in the region, also because it is a consumption-driven economy, and in the long run, it does not offer sustainability. Consequently, BKT gives priority financing to companies with sustainable structures. He reiterated the need to improve corporate governance in Kosovar companies.

Dardan Sejdiu, the financial consultant, said that the main problem in Kosovo’s economy is the lack of a clear direction in terms of the structure of the economy that the country needs, as the current consumption-based economy does not create value. He also addressed the need to train young people in line with future economic trends, which are the green and digital economy. He considers the development of financing absorption capacities of international financial institutions, but also of commercial banks for these future trends, necessary.

All panelists agreed that the institutions have a key role in creating a strategic approach to the country’s economic development by focusing on sectors and resources that offer greater potential.

2.51. Working towards a World without Waste

Prishtina, November 24, 2021 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in cooperation with the U.S Embassy and UN Habitat hosted a lecture on 'Sustainable Innovative Waste Management Solutions'.

Andina Vllahiu-Kelmendi, Policy and Communications Manager at AmCham, as well as the host of this lecture, stated that regardless of the sector, it is essential to incorporate environmental sustainability into every business model and supply chain.
She called upon entrepreneurs and businesses to focus on raising the overall awareness in regards to waste management solutions for a better environment.

Katerina Tsangari, Group Packaging Legislation Lead of Coca-Cola HBC emphasized that when it comes to the waste chain, all the chain should be functionalized; the whole chain has to be developed in such a way that we address all the problems.

During the lecture, she mentioned the contribution that CCHBC has when it comes to climate deterioration caused by harmful waste. Moreover, she explained that contrary to popular belief, plastic is actually a viable material, which is worth recycling and using. "It is the way plastic is currently being managed and collected that is not sustainable and where change needs to be made, that is why, we need to make our approach to plastic more approachable, claimed Tsangari.

Furthermore, she said that we are in a climate emergency, and everyone beginning from world leaders to businesses and individual consumers carry a responsibility to take action regarding this situation. She emphasized that if we want to avoid causing irreversible damage to our planet, change needs to happen now.

### 2.52. Circular economy, one of the solutions for reducing unemployment in Kosovo

**Pristina, November 24, 2021** – To discuss the impact and benefits of the model of circular economy, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has organized a forum with stakeholders from the U.S. Embassy, UNDP, institutions of the Republic of Kosovo, and the private sector.

Valerie Tucker, Economic and Commercial Officer at the U.S. Embassy, emphasized that the level of negotiations for climate change in Kosovo has elevated and that the Embassy has worked tirelessly to support Kosovo in moving forward, to build a strong circular economy, which is an essential issue.

"In addition to the private sector and young entrepreneurs who think about ways of creating opportunities and continuing to make Kosovo a clean environment, the entire community should be included to create a better environment. A sustainable circular economy requires infrastructure, strategy, and efficient education," added Tucker.

The expert on environmental issues from the cabinet of the Minister of Environment stated that the COP26 Summit drew the attention of the whole World, and albeit Kosovo did not attend, as individuals, every country was involved. He added that the people of Kosovo are aware of the term circular economy, but they're is still work to be done in regards to legal infrastructure. Baumann stated that the ministry is developing many projects focused on reducing energy and water energy. Furthermore, he said that a circular economy includes the environment and the economy since the primary goal is creating new jobs and saving the resources of Kosovo.

Maria Suokko, UNDP Resident Representative for Kosovo said that now she sees a big change since the issue of climate change is being discussed increasingly more. Suokko said that the general awareness for the circular economy changes depending on the country since many people see it as a big and ambitious transition. As a challenge, she mentioned the formulation of a bigger coherent plan, as well as creating a vision and identifying the objectives and the areas that need to change, then proceeding with new and innovative activities and ideas to realize them.

Nina Elezovic, Corporate Affairs and Sustainability Director at Coca-Cola HBC, as well as the moderator of the forum, said that the circular economy should be looked at as a dialog between all parties. Elezovic added that first, small projects should be treated and implemented, for them to be tested, then continuing with their realization.

### 2.53. Private sector concerned with improper response to energy crisis

**Pristina, November 26, 2021** – The energy crisis which has affected all European countries and beyond is already being felt in Kosovo, while the increase in the cost of electricity will weigh on all consumers, but
primarily those businesses. This will also hinder economic growth and endanger thousands of jobs, while the lack of a concrete action plan by the Ministry of Economy and other responsible institutions is worrying.

This was said during a forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo with representatives of the private sector, representatives of state institutions, electricity supply companies and economic experts.

Genci Beribashi, general manager of the company Ferronikeli said that as a result of the quadrupling of the price of electricity in international markets, with a significant share in the cost of operation, this company has been forced to discontinue its operation. He said that the country’s institutions should urgently address the issue of electricity supply, while the approach should be comprehensive and non-discriminatory for economic operators who are supplied with electricity in the liberal market.

Rudina Heroi Puka, representative of the Electricity Supply Company (KESCO) said that over the years the demand for electricity has increased disproportionately to local generation capacity. She said that the failure to address current issues by local institutions could jeopardize the regular supply of electricity, and this addressing should be reflected in energy subsidies or even immediate change of electricity tariffs, for all consumers.

On the other hand, the head of the Department of Energy in the Ministry of Economy, Luan Morina, said that while there is room for concern, there should be no panic, as there is enough energy in the market, talking about the work of the task force created for generation of recommendations for decision makers, to cope with the effects of a potential crisis. He also spoke about the work that the Ministry is doing in drafting the new Energy Strategy of Kosovo.

Energy expert, Pranvera Dobruna Kryeziu, spoke about the consequences of lack of proactivity in the field of energy. She also spoke about not addressing the issue of affordability of electricity supply, which should be the focus of the work of domestic institutions, as well as not following international energy trends for years, including investing in storage capacity of electricity.

Arian Zeka from the American Chamber of Commerce and Berat Rukiqi from the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce expressed their concern on behalf of businesses that the increase in the cost of electricity supply and institutional lack of support will increase the cost of operation of businesses, especially exporters, while demanding transparency and greater communication of the country’s institutions with all stakeholders, including representatives of the private sector. They demanded that the possible state subsidy be reflected in next year’s budget, recommending that between the two readings of the Draft Law on Budget 2023 before its final approval, budget funds be allocated to address the energy crisis.

2.54. Greater awareness is required from the private sector and society regarding Cybersecurity

Prishtina, November 29, 2021 - The upcoming forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo had in focus Cybersecurity and its practice on protecting critical systems.

Astrit Leti from Tive Inc. stated that Cybersecurity is about security and correctness and in the business world it is important that the transport is fast and accurate, having in mind the consequences of the pandemic nowadays. According to him, in recent years, awareness has been raised; meanwhile, he suggested more investment in data security and information technology infrastructure in general.

Moreover, he claimed that the world of Cybersecurity and more specifically data protection is divided into two parts; in the rapidly evolving part of private development, and in the public sector as well. The law must be enforced by the state, but the companies must provide basic staff training, added Leti.

"For cyber security, basic support and protection should be provided to the staff of any company," he added.

Robert Shala (Sentry) emphasized that there is a future for the market in Kosovo both in terms of business and information security, and that cybersecurity education in the early stages is essential. A long-term plan
should be considered in the upcoming years and this can be achieved through education in schools, and the development of both private and public sector, he added.

Xhavit Gashi from Cacttus noted that cybersecurity is about data storage, security information and that these need to be confidential data. According to him, the private sector is much more aware of cybersecurity as more training and programs are being developed. He mentioned the public-private partnership and education in the field of cyber security, as very significant aspects.

Ermal Sadiku (LinkPlus) and also moderator of the forum said that cybersecurity has not to do solely with the digital world, but also with the behaviors of individuals and their access to technology. Cyber security has to do with everything we do as individuals. He suggested the inclusion of a topic or subject in high schools, but also the education of society in general in regards to cybersecurity awareness.

2.55. Corporate Governance offers greater trust for investors

Prishtina, November 30, 2021 - The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized the next event with the topic ‘Workshop on Corporate Governance in SMEs and Family Businesses’, lectured by Visar Dobroshi, Managing Partner, Recura Financials.

Visar Dobroshi, Managing Partner, Recura Financials stated that this topic is important for businesses, helping them to increase and develop their businesses, afterwards increasing the number of employees, emphasizing the fact that corporate governance is essential for the well-being of the businesses.

According to him, the aspect of corporate governance and the way businesses are run, especially family businesses, are being discussed more and more. “It is becoming more and more evident that from the disorganized way of running a business come difficult moments for the business and its sustainability, and that is the moment when businesses ask for help on how to overcome those difficulties,” Dobroshi added.

Furthermore, he claimed that corporate governance involves processes that involve leadership as well as the relationship between the board, owners, shareholders, managers, and other parties, adding that corporate governance is important for businesses that are in partnership, and businesses where stakeholders are family members.

According to him, companies and businesses must timely make the division of functions, positions formalized by contracts, and job descriptions for a proper governance within the company.

He added that businesses need to have well-defined responsibilities, accountability, and transparency for good corporate governance, even if we are dealing with family businesses. He further mentioned the reasons behind the success of the companies, that are closely related to the internal systems of correctness and transparency. According to him, external consultants are a great help for consulting by giving their outside perspective and without conflict of interest in those businesses.

As one of the benefits of corporate governance, he mentioned investments which occur much more in companies that are well organized. According to him, decision making and authorization are two important aspects in the management structure of the company.

2.56. Dual Studies Program are considered as beneficial for both businesses and universities

Prishtina, December 6, 2021 - At the premises of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, at the request of Universum College, it has been organized an informal meeting which was focused on the dual study system, taking into account the fact that this model has been successful in the ICT and sales sector.

Alejtin Berisha, the Executive Director of Universum College said that Universum College is focused on industry and international cooperation, mentioning Erasmus projects and students’ opportunity to exchange new experiences. Industry should be more active and we should all be closer to businesses, so that students serve the market of society and 50% of them are not given such an opportunity, said Berisha.
The Deputy Director of Universum College, Uran Rraci said that dual studies are a German system that is, a collaboration between industries and universities. He added that teaching continues to take place in a traditional way, and that the university curriculum does not correspond to the labor market according to the research they have conducted with Caritas.

The dual study system enables students to stay longer in the company and during that time, students are shaped based on the policies that the business develops and adapts to the company. Research conducted by Universum College showed that businesses are mainly looking for individuals who are innovative and creative. He added that both sides benefit; the company that hires new staff, who are trained and adapted to the company culture, while universities on the other hand, create new opportunities for other students’ successes.

Further on, Rraci said that master level students are believed to be more exposed to the dual study system. Students’ motivation was mentioned as one of the key factors for an effective performance at work.

In addition, it has been said that dual study systems are a great opportunity for students to have important experiences that would impact their career later on.

2.57. **Members of the Tax and Legal Affairs Committee discussed today the TAK project for "Formalization of Employees"**

*Prishtina, December 8, 2021* – In the meeting of the Tax and Legal Affairs Committee with the representatives of the Tax Administration of Kosovo, Sami Salihu, director of the Department for Registration and Taxpayer Service, started the meeting by explaining the new project of the Tax Administration of Kosovo, a project which as aims to support workers in their rights to the work they do. Furthermore, the project aims to identify tax evaders, as well.

Mr. Salihu addressed some of the findings of TAK regarding the non-fulfillment of obligations and the reasons that lead to it, mentioning informal employment, low declaration of wages despite the number of employees, non-payment of pension contributions, inaccurate declaration of employees, payment of salaries in cash and non-declaration of withholding tax. Mr. Salihu did not ignore the soft implementation of the law and the inadequate legal basis.

The meeting continued with talking about the project focusing on meetings with stakeholders, information about the benefits, awareness of the risks, changing the legal basis, changes in the information technology system, coordination of activities with relevant institutions and increasing the intensity of activities in the field.

TAK concludes the presentation by giving the message that as an institution they are ready to help at every step and calls on members not to hesitate to seek advice, assistance or guidance on how to declare payments.

Agron Hamiti, director of the Department for Risk Management and Planning, added that the interest is shared by both the private sector and the Tax Administration of Kosovo.

Additionally, the members of the Committees gave their comments on the project, as well as the work of TAK in general.

2.58. **The Minister of Health discusses with the Healthcare Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce for the development of the health sector**

*Prishtina, December 9, 2021* – The newly appointed Minister of Health, Dr. Rifat Latifi, visited the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo to discuss with members of the Healthcare Committee of this organization, regarding the challenges and opportunities of the health sector.

In a meeting with companies from the hospital and pharmaceutical sector, Minister Latifi pledged to partner with private sector stakeholders to receive their advice and recommendations for the development of the health sector in the country.
Expressing awareness of the difficulties that characterize this sector, he also expressed optimism that the difficulties can overcome gradually. He said that he started by analyzing the functioning of all links of the healthcare system, with a focus on identifying shortcomings, which prevent the proper functioning of the system.

On the other hand, representatives of hospital and pharmaceutical companies presented to the Minister the issues they face by offering some general recommendations on how to overcome these issues, including the advancement of legislation, as well as digitalization in step with global technological developments.

2.59. **Members of the Human Resources Committee discussed relevant issues regarding the human resources management**

*Prishtina, December 7, 2021*—The Human Resources Committee had a fruitful discussion with the members of this committee who discussed and suggested recommendations on the continuation of work and the new measures adopted by the government against the pandemic, adding that this affects the operation of companies and the way they are organized as well.

In addition, it was also said that working from home is not anymore, a necessity, but also a desire of the employees themselves, as they have been adapted to this system, and also were being mentioned the challenges of companies regarding the flexibility of all stakeholders involved in companies. The Labour law and the aspects on which changes should be made, as well as the drafting of contracts were two of the topics which were discussed by the committee as well. Members of the committee shared their experiences of how they are operating during the pandemic and the ‘hybrid’ work that they believe will be inevitable in the coming months.

Among other things, during the meeting manifold ideas were exchanged regarding the continuity of work from office premises and from home, adding that this situation increases the pressure on the human resources sector as everything must be well coordinated.

It was recommended for the unions to be more active in general and that together they should raise their concerns in regards to labour and labour law more specifically.

2.60. **Education Committee members discussed the current challenges of education and the way forward**

*Prishtina, December 8, 2021*—In this meeting, the members of the Education Committee discussed important aspects of the education sector in Kosovo. Members discussed the current challenges in the education system in Kosovo, mentioning the development of a possible strategy regarding the certification of vocational schools and those who complete it, which are later ‘protected’ in the labor market.

Furthermore, the members mentioned the profiling and branching of professions at the master level adding that the course should be more specific.

It was also suggested that the Ministry of Education should work upon releasing statistics on the number of students employed after graduation, leaving aside academic titles and individual achievements. Members emphasized the need for staff in the field of production and engineering, adding that there is still a lack of awareness in this regard. They also recommended the discussion on a larger level of bullying in schools and the monitoring of teaching as very important issues.

2.61. **Trade and Customs Committee members suggested important issues for next year’s agenda**

*Prishtina, December 14, 2021*—In this meeting, members of the Committee of Trade and Customs discussed important aspects of this sector in Kosovo.

Members discussed the difficulties with FVA regarding barriers and lengthy procedures for import issues, adding that if we want to ‘follow’ the European Union, the legislature must be followed as well. Moreover,
they mentioned the fact of waiting for weeks for the goods to be imported due to delays in issuing certificates and laboratories. In addition, it was emphasized the non-acceptance of online certificates by the customs for businesses suggesting such a thing and the challenges of product differentiation as well.

Moreover, members mentioned the issue of reducing informality by discussing with the Ministry of Finance and Customs on the agenda for next year. The members of the trade and customs committee discussed the law on domestic and foreign trade as an important aspect, discussing their continuity and functioning. Furthermore, members mentioned the implementation of fiscal cash registers and the commercial court in terms of timely resolution of cases for businesses.

2.62. Countries that fight money laundering on the economy are considered to be the largest economies in the world

Prishtina, December 15, 2021 – At the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, the forum on ‘Prevention of Money Laundering on the Economy and their impact, a forum which aroused great interest from businesses, was held.

Labinot Preniqi, former Head of the PPP / FT Division at the CBK and former Deputy Director of the FIU-K mentioned the risks of money laundering and the ‘preservation’ of the involvement of businesses in these phenomena.

According to him, the discussion and topic on money laundering on the economy still remains as a new field for businesses while adding that the vast majority of businesses are not aware in regards to this topic and challenges as well. Furthermore, he stated that this topic encompasses many operations and challenges that occur on an ongoing basis.

‘The legal regulatory aspect has evolved over time and businesses should be protected from illegal funds for reasons of profit or even business reputation’, said Preniqi. He also emphasized that the placement of money laundering phase is considered to be the riskiest phase for businesses.

Behar Xhema, Acting Director of the FIU-K and Deputy Director of the FIU-K mentioned as a very significant point the reduction of the usage of cash as one of the main factors that would positively affect the money laundering process in the economy, which according to him has had already a progress in this regard.

According to him, banks pose the greatest risk, followed by other sectors and legal entities as well.

Fitim Konjusha, Director of the Department for PPP / FT and Compliance in the Union and moderator of this event said that the process of money laundering in the economy is destructive to the economy and competition between businesses.

2.63. The members of the Manufacturing Committee discussed the impact that the energy crisis has on manufacturing

Prishtina, December 15, 2021 – At the meeting of the Manufacturing Committee, held yesterday at the American Chamber, the members of the Committee addressed their concern regarding the energy crisis that has already affected the state of Kosovo, as well as the impact it has in their scope as manufacturers.

Bajram Rushiti, from Buka Bakery, started the meeting by mentioning the big losses that could be caused in the future, if no quick steps are taken by the relevant institutions. Rushiti went on to point out that the energy crisis will last indefinitely, and that subsidizing, even if only in part, would be the only way out of the situation they are in now.

Estimating prices and building solar panels, with priority given to the private sector, were additional recommendations given by Mr. Rushiti.

Taulant Krasniqi, mentioned that Kosovo can take an example from the most developed countries in terms of models to deal with the energy crisis.
Further, Agron Jusufi, raised the issue of bureaucracy as an obstacle to foreign investment, citing more precisely the case of a French firm which after a long wait for a response from the Republic of Kosovo, went to northern Macedonia and made the investment which he wanted to do in Kosovo, in the first place.

2.64. Properly drafting Contracts avoids sending cases to Court

Prishtina, December 21, 2021—Drafting contracts, the role of lawyers, the building blocks on which a contract is built, arbitration and dispute resolution were some of the topics addressed at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo today.

Visar Ramaj, RPHS Law Partner, claimed that drafting contracts is more of an art than a science. He mentioned the significance and the consequences of non-implementation of drafting contracts.

In addition, he said that the only effective ‘tool’ that a contract will be implemented by the other party is the compensation for damages and that if something is not functioning in the implementation of the contract, then the problem lies with the drafter and the way of how the contract was drafted. The role of the lawyer in drafting contracts is to analyze the details and business logic of the agreement and understand it and afterwards transform it into a specific contract.

Mentor Hajdaraj, Partner RPHS Law, said that if the team and the legal office do not function then in most cases the parties seek solutions in court. He mentioned the aspect of the negotiation between the businesses to reach the contract and until then a lot of work needs to be done in clarifying the details. Moreover, he mentioned the importance of understanding the nature of business and analytical skills as two important points in drafting contracts.

Mentor Hajdaraj said that the business term sheet summarizes the logic of the transaction that will be prepared which includes dates, investments, responsibilities and that it is preferable to obtain the approval of persons who have been part of the negotiations. The legal term sheet includes seven building blocks of contracts which are divided into representations relating to market power, warranty, obligations, restrictions, and rights of the other party.

Festa Stavileci, RPHS Law emphasized efficiency, expertise and low cost as some of the advantages of arbitration over courts in resolving disputes.

A well-drafted contract is essential in resolving cases without sending the case to court, and it is the above-mentioned blocks that reduce the possibility of errors in drafting contracts, said Hajdaraj.

2.65. The Hospitality and Tourism Committee called on the government to take no further restrictive measures

Prishtina, December 22, 2021—The members of the Gastronomy and Tourism committee addressed today important issues that they want to advocate for next year for this sector.

Members of the Committee mentioned as one of the main points the permission of the hospitality and tourism sector to continue working and to not have a total closure of the country.

They also took the examples of countries in the region which have more security due to the accommodation of foreign tourists emphasizing hospitality as one of the businesses that has mostly suffered the consequences of the pandemic. Also, as a problem, members mentioned the continuation of payments from this sector where in the meantime they were not operating as a business and also the problems with the reduction of hours and persons allowed within certain spaces.

Moreover, it was discussed about the disproportionate distribution of economic aid by the Government and the inclusion of all businesses in a package as one of the important aspects to be considered by the country’s institutions, thus suggesting the classification of businesses based on how ‘harmed’ they were and their gained benefits as well.

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Members also demanded compensation for businesses in case of closure and a request for a VAT reduction.

As another important aspect, they mentioned timely information about the measures adopted by the Government regarding the pandemic, thus creating a bridge of communication between institutions and businesses because according to them, it is worrying due to the reservations made and tourists which then coincides with cancellation of reservations which then affects tourism as well.

Members also mentioned staff vaccination and adherence to measures by businesses that should then facilitate their operation without total closure.

2.66. Many recommendations and priorities were suggested today by members of Tax Committee for the upcoming year

Prishtina, December 22, 2021– Among many other topics that were discussed, Members of the Tax Committee discussed today about the barriers and the tax legislature in the country.

The members of the Tax Committee discussed the administrative instructions and the law on corporate income. According to members, the tax legislation has undergone changes and even today there are requests for clarifications and additional information for incentives and administrative instructions, especially in their interpretation.

In terms of administrative instructions, it was said that many bureaucratic procedures should be eliminated and looked at them in detail, always by reasoning and lobbying to attract foreign investors who are hesitant due to security, political situation, and potential risk. Also, as a very important topic, members mentioned the guidelines for specific weight loss in the tax legislation where there should be greater clarity and detail.

Finally, members discussed bureaucratic barriers and procedures and corporate income tax legislation which should be unified for taxpayers.

2.67. The Significance, Impact and Sustainability of KAEF program

Prishtina, December 22, 2021– American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo hosted the Kosovo American Education Fund who presented the conducted study regarding KAEF program.

Gjeni Shporta from the Kosovo American Education Fund mentioned the importance of KAEF scholarships, as well as the research that has been conducted on the impact of the program, which marked its 17th anniversary this year. Furthermore, he mentioned the purpose of this program, that is, the economic development of Kosovo through master's scholarships to then contribute to various areas of economic development in Kosovo. From this program out of 111 students who have studied, 103 of them have returned and continue to contribute in Kosovo and more than 40 universities have hosted Kosovar students thus they have supported the program as well, he added.

Erëza Gjikolli, scholarship holder, mentioned three components on which the research focused; the importance, impact and sustainability of the program as well.90% of scholarship holders that were interviewed mentioned the aspect of career development as the main reason for applying to the program as they consider it as an important step for the future. Other reasons relate to improving academic skills and income, as well as contributing to Kosovo as one of the main objectives.

Whereas Hana Bacaj, claimed that the businesses in which these scholarship holders have worked have expressed that they have emphasized integrity and responsibility at work.

In conclusion, Tringa Krasniqi said that this program has an impact in the economic and social aspect, in which most of these students contribute to the private sector mostly in areas like ICT, and education.

2.68. Digital Economy is the future and businesses should adapt to new changes
Pristina, December 23, 2021– American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo held the second session of NoHost Talk to further discuss the real Digital Economy Potentials.

Valon Canhasi from Hallakate said that the development of technologies in the world has had a great impact in the development of companies in Kosovo. According to him, today many companies in Kosovo offer digital services. This development was also influenced by the pandemic where every process had to be completed online and in the upcoming years is expected that development of the digital economy will happen to a greater extent.

Furthermore, he said that new businesses should be ready for a transformation in the digital economy. In terms of human capital, he called on businesses to invest more in staff training to increase employees’ skills in certain fields. The country code top level domain should remain a priority of the government to further develop the business ecosystem, thus mentioning digital recognition and electronic signature as two aspects that should be further advanced, he said.

Arianit Fazliu from Kutia stated that today the ecosystem of doing business especially in the field of technology is in the phase of exploration due to many factors such as; identifying the needs of customers outside Kosovo and the impact of the pandemic on the digital economy.

According to him, local companies have consistently shown great progress in this field and what remains success but a challenge as well is the competitiveness with foreign companies at the global level. While discussing human capital, he suggested young people profiling in certain fields and career guidance also as an important step for the future of companies and the individual himself.

Online shopping has increased during the pandemic and the increase in demand has been greater and according to him, greater awareness in technical support and other important issues is required from these companies.

2.69. AmCham’s Trade and Customs Committee held a meeting with the Executive Director of AFVK

Pristina, December 23, 2021– Members of the AmCham Trade and Customs Committee held a meeting with the Executive Director of AFVK to discuss important aspects of the sector for the coming year.

Flamur Kadriu, the Executive Director of AFVK claimed that he welcomes recommendations for cooperation with members of the committee for solving eventual problems by following the rules and procedures that are defined by law, thus following international rules with modern practices.

The members of the Trade and Customs Committee mentioned the procedures and the long wait during the control of goods, and suggested an adaptation and harmonization of the legislation in the same way as the EU countries. As another requirement, members mentioned the usage of the digital certificate.

The committee members and the Executive Director of AFVK also discussed other important topics about this sector.

2.70. Many recommendations and priorities were suggested today by members of the of the Legal Affairs Committee for the upcoming year

Pristina, December 23, 2021- Among other things, the members of the Committee on Legal Affairs discussed the priorities for the coming year. It was discussed at the meeting that an agenda should be set to take concrete steps and that the consolidation of this committee is very important. It was said that goals should be set together and working towards achieving these goals, as well.

The opinion that they should be up to date with the draft laws, was also expressed. Meanwhile, Fisnik Salihu said that it is good that when it comes to legal issues in other commissions, the legal commission helps in these matters.
At the suggestion of the members, there was a little discussion about encouraging businesses to train lawyers to deal with various contracts, to represent companies, so that not every person can represent those companies without a bar exam, as no responsibility is taken on the opposite.

3. GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK

3.1. Global Entrepreneurship Kick off, AmCham will be organizing 23 activities throughout the week

Prishtina, November 8, 2021 – The official opening ceremony of the Global Entrepreneurship Week was marked in Kosovo starting from November 8 that has been held at the National Library of Kosovo.

The ceremony began with a video message from the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Dr. Vjosa Osmani, whereas to discuss about the significance and empowerment of entrepreneurship in the country, in this ceremony keynote speeches were delivered also by the Acting U.S Ambassador to Kosovo, Nicholas J. Giacobbe, The Executive Director of the American Chamber in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, Acting Ambassador of Sweden, Nasrin Pourghazian, Chief of EBRD Office in Kosovo, Neil Taylor, and Uranik Begu, Executive Director of ICK.

Global Entrepreneurship Week is considered to be one of the biggest entrepreneurial festive events in the world, where new ideas and fruitful discussions about entrepreneurship and young entrepreneurs are exchanged.

Arian Zeka, The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo emphasized that AmCham is a ‘champion’ in the organizations of the activities during the Global Entrepreneurship Week. Furthermore, he mentioned that 23 activities are expected to be organized, hence, including various topics related to business and entrepreneurship.

3.2. An entrepreneurial woman in Kosovo, a challenge and a success in itself

Prishtina, November 8, 2021 - The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo started the Global Entrepreneurship Week with the theme of great importance, which is “Celebrating Women Entrepreneurs”.

The forum panelists shared great knowledge about their experiences and challenges as entrepreneurs in Kosovo. Participants in this panel were; Albin Kurti, (Prime Minister of Kosovo), Edi Gusia (Chief Executive Officer of the Agency for Gender Equality), Valbona Dushi (Ministry of Trade and Industry), Arberëro Riza (Founder of HUUMë), Arta Istrefi Jahja (Founder of Women Entrepreneurs of Kosovo), and Melita Ymeraga (Founder of Melita & Partners), and forum moderator as well.

In his introductory speech, Arian Zeka, Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce emphasized that this year twenty activities will be organized within the Global Entrepreneurship Week. Further on, Zeka added that this week also promotes the spirit of entrepreneurship, therefore the American Chamber of Commerce conducts activities that aim to encourage young people in order to see entrepreneurship as a potential for their career development.

Furthermore, he added that the American Chamber of Commerce believes in young entrepreneurs and that without gender empowerment, there can be no full utilization of the entrepreneurship potentials.

The Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti said that in the revival package special focus and attention will be paid to the economic empowerment of women. This is what the Prime Minister said at the forum “Women in Entrepreneurship” organized by the American Chamber of Commerce of Kosovo.

Further on, he said that the number of women in the enterprise is smaller compared to men, adding that although in a significantly smaller number women face many challenges.

“As long as women and girls make up half of the population of our country, we cannot claim inclusive growth without their inclusion in the labor market, even without their participation in decision-making.”
said Prime Minister Kurti. Therefore, the Prime Minister stressed the importance of the economic revival package for the empowerment of women and the support of their employment.

The Prime Minister added that measure 1.3 provides that every woman who has not been employed in the last three months and who has been employed, will receive subsidies of 50% of salary for the first three months, up to the value of 150 euros per month. Whereas, after the three-month period, employed women will be subsidized their pension contribution until June 2022, added the Prime Minister.

Edi Gusia, Chief Executive Officer of the Agency for Gender Equality, listed the reasons for the small number of women entrepreneurs and said that this is due to the lack of gender mainstreaming which is highlighted in discrimination in employment, low level of education, segregation of gender occupations, unequal segregation of responsibilities, and low ownership of women in ownership to initiate business.

Women in Kosovo face historical and systematic discrimination, and women have managed to close spaces that are centuries old, Gusia said.

Arbërore Riza, founder of HUUMë mentioned as one of the difficulties of entrepreneurs the informal economy which according to her remains a challenge for the business market in Kosovo. Further, Riza asked for greater moral support and added that the focus of government and institutions should be small producers and not just large ones.

Arta Istrefi Jahja, Founder of Women Entrepreneurs in Kosovo, said that businesses need to be more informed and that there is a significant difference between women in rural areas compared to urban ones.

"Women should support women," and there is a need for women to have a network of their own, said Istrefi Jahja. Valbona Dushi, from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, said that there is a trend of growth of entrepreneurs during these years, but the dialogue is needed with all actors to continue further.

The manufacturing industry and the textile sector are considered leaders in women’s employment, Dushi added. Melita Ymeraga, founder of Melita & Partners mentioned other challenges such as lack of human resources, globalization which are challenges those entrepreneurs are facing in general.

3.3. Technology helps businesses to cross borders

Prishtina, November 8, 2021– In the upcoming forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, technology has been the core topic of discussion with panelists from the private sector.

The moderator of this event and the Chief Commercial Officer at BP Home, Diedon Kica, said that since Kosovo is an isolated country, technology helps us to go beyond borders. Kica had a message for all companies to invest in their staff and orient their companies towards global exports and markets.

Leonida Ismaili, CAD Designer at Eneldat, said that technology is inevitable, especially for businesses, and that changes have come as a result of the development of technology. She said that we live in a world of globalization and that businesses cannot operate outside Kosovo without the use of technology. “The relationship between the founders and the employees makes the company important in the market,” she added.

The CEO of ArtHouse, Blin Zeqiri stressed that technology helps predict the marketing industry and audience demands. Further, he added that the focus should be on vocational schools and training in order to have abundant resources and to have a clear strategy of where we are and where we want to orient ourselves.

Rinor Ahmeti, the representative at VAIU Global said that entrepreneurship solves a problem faced by our society, and it is done only through information technology, for better customer service, so that the result is better. Ahmeti encouraged young people to research the labor market before deciding on their studies.

Agon Avdimetaj, the co-founder of Zombie Soup, added that technology is the reason for the current development where we are and that it is the easiest way to get information. Avdimetaj said the technology
automates traditional processes with greater precision than humans and at a much lower cost. He concluded by mentioning creativity in sales and the use of marketing to achieve company objectives.

### 3.4. Corporate culture, a great indicator for the achievement of organizational objectives

_Pristina, November 9, 2021_– The significance of company culture is vital in manifold ways. Hence, Amcham has organized a forum today regarding the company culture and relationships.

Frosina Islami from the company Coca Cola HBC Kosovo, and also the moderator of the event, said that the company where she works focuses on corporate culture and the adaptation of the latest strategies, as well as the distribution of diversity and gender equality. She said that they predict that 50% of the managerial positions will be held by women, which according to her is a challenge, and at the same time offers employment opportunities for women and plays a role in gender equality.

Merita Gashi Hajrizi from Cacttus Education mentioned the challenges in implementing the strategies created over the years, taking into account the fact that the market is growing and constantly changing, and that new strategies are required to implement different policies. Gashi Hajrizi further said that adaptation and global thinking carry challenges, and at the moment of recruitment the fulfillment of ISO standards is required, where the staff adapts more easily due to regulations almost similar to the world ones. According to her, the pandemic did not affect the functioning of the company because they were prepared in advance by organizing training for mental health.

From Raiffeisen Bank, Burim Brahimi said that the organizational culture starts from the vision to the values, the behaviors of individuals are considered important within the values of companies. Moreover, integration in terms of culture and change of mindset is considered as one of the most difficult aspects as each company has its own strategic plans and objectives of where it will reach. Further, in the context of the relationship, the most important is considered the relationship with customers, and that the basis for the functioning of the latter is the trust for a healthy relationship. This also applies to other relations, and other partners who are associates of the bank said, Brahimi.

Shpresa Kika from Sutherland mentioned the local and global policies of the companies thus making the organizational culture even more inclusive. According to her, regardless of location, the mentality of the company should be similar in the places where the company operates. She mentioned as a challenge the digital signing in Kosovo and the development of training during the pandemic period, emphasizing the importance that in addition to achievements, it is good to leave good practices behind.

### 3.5. Promoting entrepreneurship at an early age enhances the potential of young entrepreneurs

_Pristina, November 9, 2021_– The next event in the framework of the Global Entrepreneurship Week organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has discussed the inclusion of education and vocational schools, so that this translates into the preparation of new staff and serves as an aid for young entrepreneurs.

Andina Vllahiu Kelmendi, Policy and Communications Manager at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo said that the Global Entrepreneurship Week is an extraordinary opportunity to discuss elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, where education is an important element, therefore the American Chamber of Commerce believes that through education, young entrepreneurs are provided with knowledge for securing resources, but also increasing innovative and creative skills.

Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Arbërie Nagavci said that this topic is very important given that the Global Entrepreneurship Week aims to inspire women and men in the field of entrepreneurship. Further, she stated that during this week the success stories and challenges of young entrepreneurs are exchanged, thus inviting all relevant actors to jointly support these entrepreneurs. Minister Nagavci emphasized that education in entrepreneurship brings many benefits, and therefore, the skills learned by students through the curriculum are important to bring benefits to their careers and to be encouraged to define their careers.
Diellza Gashi, Lecturer in Management Courses at the American University in Kosovo mentioned the
devolution in education, in terms of the field of entrepreneurship, changing the mentality of traditional
education in schools and that young people are seen as competent in problem solving. She stressed the
importance of starting early in the field of entrepreneurship and encouraged young people to be as present
as possible in various activities and training.

ASSET Program Manager, Kosovo Education Center, Luljeta Demjaha Belegu shared more information
about the project funded by USAID, where she said that the focus of this project was to help education
reform, where all teachers are trained. Moreover, the students have gained various knowledge about the
business plan, how the market is analyzed, and in the end those students have come up with a virtual firm
designed by themselves.

Alejitin Berisha from Universum College and at the same time moderator of this event mentioned an issue
that is being faced by educational institutions, such as vocational schools, which does not generate revenue
and that the focus of entrepreneurship lies in the field of technology and natural fields. Further, he added
that schools should have greater independence.

3.6. Gastronomers encourage the support of local products

Pristina, November 9, 2021 – The next discussion organized by the American Chamber of Commerce
focused on enterprises in the food sector, the difficulties, and successes in this field.

Founder of Green & Protein, and also the moderator of the event, Ardian Hoxha mentioned the importa-
tance of gastronomy and the food sector in generating new jobs, thus bringing revenue to the state itself.
Moreover, these businesses inspire other fields of business, both in the local and international image.
Regarding the impact of the pandemic on the food sector, he said it has been a challenge, but that it has also
brought some benefits to the founding-employee relationship, because creativity has increased, and it has
had lower costs as well.

Baton Domi, founder of Soma Book Station said every detail is important in the field of gastronomy. He
added that “Soma Slow Food” is based on traditional refined cuisine and that great importance is given to
local growers, thus emphasizing the care they have with the products they serve. He further mentioned as
their vision the re-identification of Kosovo products in the awareness of the products it works with and the
possibility of exporting these products which according to him can happen through restaurants, markets,
and agriculture. In this way, farmers are stimulated and new industries are created that can be exported
abroad.

Shpend Thaqi, co-founder of Sach stressed the importance of customer trust adding that other things flow
on their own. He spoke about the importance of market research and the importance of market adaptation
in Kosovo. He said that starting a new business requires original ideas, achievable desires, and investment
in time. Thaqi also commented on the fact that businesses aim to immediately reach the pinnacle of success,
but according to him, a new enterprise requires processes and takes time.

3.7. The pandemic accelerated the e-commerce development in Kosovo

Pristina, November 10, 2021 - An important discussion took place at the premises of the American Chamber
of Commerce in Kosovo, while activities are continuing in the framework of Global Entrepreneurship Week.
We have discussed e-commerce development and entrepreneurship, focusing on the challenges that the e-
commerce community faces and the impact of the pandemic on accelerating the use of e-commerce, with
young entrepreneurs.

Genta Brestovci from the company EBAA mentioned the impact that the pandemic had on the awareness
of customers, as well as businesses that did not operate on the online platform before the pandemic, and
that the pandemic has made them think of this part, as well. She cited the difficulty of operating an online
business, given that there is no specific law on purchases made through online platforms.

The co-founder of Walone Fashion Group, Benek Osmani said that the official sites of online clothing
purchases have not been at the level they are now, but after the pandemic, customers paid more attention
to this part, thus emphasizing that the largest number of persons in the textile industry make purchases by being physically at the stores.

Erëmal Bajrami, general manager at KFC Kosova said that the orders through the official website have not been very developed, regarding the food industry. Further, he said the pandemic has accelerated their plans for a new online ordering strategy. According to him, great organization is needed in terms of logistics and workers. Bajrami said that their goal as a food industry is that the customer does not encounter difficulties during the order. “As a company, we have mobilized well by creating call centers, in case the individuals who order do not encounter difficulties in reaching out for food or even other obstacles,” said Bajrami.

Kushtrim Dushi, founder of Rave Travel mentioned the difficulty of selling tickets through online platforms due to the pandemic and lack of organization of events in Kosovo. He said that banks should have easier and more practical procedures in resolving the situation gradually. Dushi further added that in terms of digital marketing, the main focus is on social networks as the best promotion is done in that form.

### 3.8. Kosovo continues to face challenges in sustainable development despite recent improvements

*Prishtina, November 10, 2021* – To discuss sustainable development and entrepreneurship in Kosovo, the American Chamber of Commerce organized its next forum, with stakeholders from the U.S. Embassy, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

Economic and Commercial Officer at the U.S. Embassy Valerie Tucker said that sustainable development is a sector that has potential for investment. Renewable energy and recycling are two areas that should be considered as the most important, she said. “Kosovo faces many challenges regarding the air quality and water resources, and these are critical to the environment in which we live,” Tucker added.

Guri Shkodra, project manager at SOWI Kosova said that we live in a time where great damage is being caused to our planet. He said that individual commitment, and then business commitment, is needed for a better and more suitable environment, and that the challenges of entrepreneurs correspond more in the legal aspect than in the financial one. The Project Coordinator at the Balkan Green Foundation, Shpend Mustafa emphasized that through training, this foundation helps young people to have a great impact on society with their business ideas, up to the right result during their journey. Further, Mustafa called for the help of existing small businesses, as well as new ones.

Enisa Serhati, portfolio manager at UNDP, said that sustainable development is still in critical stages. Further, she said they have developed training to support strategies for sustainable development and better environment.

Valon Hoti, director of the company Zinkunie said that there is room for improvements in terms of environment in Kosovo compared to the European market. Hoti called on entrepreneurs to focus on recyclable products, as well as foreign investors to support Kosovo in creating a better environment for the community.

Donikë Beqiri, research assistant at INDEP, mentioned the importance of including subjects that support the environment and the green agenda in schools. In this way, Beqiri said that a new teaching culture will be created for pre-university education.

Karsten Klapp, founder of ‘GoBeyond’ said that Kosovo has great potential for entrepreneurship and added that production depends on farmers. He encouraged entrepreneurs to think about the future of the business and its impact on the environment in which we live.

### 3.9. Success and failure – two significant factors that impact the professional growth of any individual

*Prishtina, November 10, 2021* – Failure and the road to success were discussed at the forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, with stakeholders from the private sector.
Jeta Zagragja, director of business operations at UCX, said that during her professional journey she has faced many problems and challenges, and that failure in entrepreneurship is inevitable, considering it as an integral part of success. Zagragja said that each experience helps in professional and personal life, but with maturity and experience, these are neutralized. “Taking risks in entrepreneurship often results in failures,” she said.

Gëzim Avdiu, co-founder and owner of Pixels, said that young people should follow the trends and combine them with enthusiasm and creativity to achieve success in the foreign market. He further stressed that training should be held so that in the future we do not face a shortage of professional staff.

Valon Canhasi, founder of Hallakate company and moderator of the forum stressed the importance of motivating individuals and encouraging them towards a path with a better future.

3.10. **Kosovo businesses – a crucial factor in generating new jobs**

*Prishtina, November 10, 2021* – During the forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, in the framework of Global Entrepreneurship Week, the role of the local government in promoting entrepreneurship was discussed with the mayors of Kosovo.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka stressed that this forum focuses on the elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, which are inevitable, both at the local and central levels.

Bedri Hamza, the new mayor of Mitrovica, stressed that the issue of employment remains a priority and those businesses should be simplified administrative procedures, in order to have as few taxes as possible. He further mentioned that infrastructure and a special office for businesses should be created, emphasizing that the latter are facing a lack of professional staff, and in this regard, the profile of students is very important, as we are facing global competition.

‘A special fund will be created for new businesses in Mitrovica, especially for innovative businesses and those run by women and girls. The field of information technology will also have great support, having in mind that the future is the digital economy,’ said Hamza.

The mayor of Suhareka, Bali Muharremaj said that there is a significant number of businesses in Suhareka and that he sees great potential and interest from the diaspora to invest in this municipality. He further said that the industrial zone would give priority to new businesses and that schools, such as the technical school in Suhareka have helped the increase of jobs. “Health and occupational insurance remain challenges for Kosovo so that the potential of the workforce develops in Kosovo,” said Muharremaj.

3.11. **Kelmendi claims that the economic independence in Kosovo occurred before political independence**

*Prishtina, November 11, 2021* – Ramiz Kelmendi, founder and owner of Elkos Group shared his journey and that of his company, by citing the challenges and successes he has experienced thus far.

Kelmendi said that his journey started with various practical experiences and began by opening several grocery stores in his hometown, and later in other cities around the country. Counting the challenges over the years, Kelmendi mentioned the issues with his stores during the time, because of the regime, but according to him the business he had started at that time was a novelty for the market in Kosovo.

“The more your business expands, the greater the challenges, due to market competition and lack of professional staff,” he said.

Further, Kelmendi said that in the business he leads, in addition to the role as a manager, he tries to educate and advance his employees. He called for the creation of a special fund for obtaining mortgages for young people, because the workforce is increasingly directed to European countries, and added that for this reason, his company plans to reach an average salary of 800 EURO by 2022.
The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka stressed that through these activities organized by the American Chamber of Commerce, we aim to inform and encourage young people to start their journey as young entrepreneurs.

3.12. **Strengthening the economic diplomacy should remain a foreign policy priority**

*Prishtina, November 11, 2021* - To discuss the impact of commercial diplomacy on business and exports, former Kosovo ambassadors were invited to a forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce and Innovation Centre of Kosovo, with the support of USAID Kosovo Compete Activity, who gave special focus to the challenges faced by diplomats and businesses in Kosovo.

Bernard Nikaj, former Ambassador of Kosovo to Belgium expressed the importance of this forum, by thanking the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo for this organization and said that he hopes that after this forum, changes will occur because such initiatives are lacking. He cited one of the shortcomings of the small number of economic or digital diplomats to attract investors. Nikaj said that the barriers remain the same – the coordination between actors in Kosovo and not between institutions and embassies.

Former Ambassador of Kosovo to Panama Zana Rudi said that businesses are aware of what they want to achieve and that exporters from Kosovo have success stories, but she suggested that there is a bridge between businesses and institutions.

Leon Malazoglu, former Ambassador of Kosovo to Japan, at the same time moderator of the forum, stressed that commercial diplomacy should be at the service of businesses. He cited as a shortcoming the provision of information about businesses and that the private sector should make this access easier in the future.

3.13. **Incorporating SDG principles for a better environment**

*Prishtina, November 11, 2021* - Incorporating SDG principles has been the topic tackled during the forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

Maria Suokko from UNDP affirmed that the goal of sustainable development is the foundation of everything they do. In addition, she said that these principles reflect the well-being of people and the planet in general. Suokko said green communities should work together to incorporate these principles in Kosovo, arguing that many countries are moving back towards the green agenda because of the pandemic. According to her, there has been progress in Kosovo, and that through the private sector, innovations, and the involvement of partnerships, sustainable development can be ensured as these principles have an ambitious agenda.

The founder of Fight or Flight Hana Zeqa affirmed that as young entrepreneurs, their focus is sustainable development in the field of fashion. Moreover, she asserted that the initial idea was not to create another brand, but always keep in mind the production and promotion of awareness about the inclusion of these principles. Regarding ‘Slow fashion,’ she mentioned the difficulty of finding durable materials, as in Kosovo there are not many resources and they have to get them from other countries.

Niki Murseli, co-founder of DyVo said that they are working with plastic waste by educating the younger generations to work with sustainable materials and helping them with professional knowledge, as they are the leaders of the future, therefore they are working to raise awareness in relation to this topic.

Frosina Islami from Coca-Cola HBC Kosovo, and at the same time moderator of this forum, stressed the importance of ways that the new generations can incorporate the principles of the goal of sustainable development in Kosovo.

3.14. **Youth voice matters in policy and decision-making**

*Prishtina, November 11, 2021* - To discuss the role of young people in decision-making, the next guest on a forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo was Ognjen Marković from the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).
Andina Vlahiu Kelmendi, Policy and Communication Manager at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo said that in the framework of Global Entrepreneurship Week, the American Chamber has organized activities that have important elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and that this includes human capital including participation. youth. Further, she said that Kosovo has many young people and in this regard, the participation of young people and new generations means greater and innovative solutions in the country where they live or work.

Ognjen Marković, Team Leader for the Western Balkans, RCC, said the purpose of the Regional Cooperation Council is to promote youth participation by relying on youth councils to bring best practices from all areas. According to him, increasing the participation of young people is not an easy thing to do, but they are in a region where the younger generations have great potential and talent. Moreover, Markovic said that young people are leaving and that countries in the region should see young people as a solution and a key investment in society.

He recommended supporting young people in decision-making as many of them are leaving due to high unemployment. Therefore, it is important that young people are motivated and encouraged to contribute and stay in their countries. Markovic said Kosovo is leading the innovation market and young people should use their knowledge and skills, citing commitment as one of the most important aspects of youth participation in decision-making and policy-making.

### 3.15. Intellectual property awareness for the early-stages of the companies

**Prishtina, 12 November 2021** – The forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, focused on the protection of intellectual property and its importance for enterprises.

Isa Dukaj, Deputy General Director of the Agency for Industrial Property, said that industrial property should be registered because there are legal regulations for this. The industrial property protects patents, trademarks, trade secrets and more, he said. Dukaj recommended that the registration of physical and intangible assets be done before launching products and services in the market.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of Law, Luljeta Plakolli said that intellectual property surrounds us in every possible sphere. According to her, enterprises should systematically protect intellectual property. Plakolli said that any trademark, patent or invention, is protected by law and called on businesses to be more attentive and act in a timely manner regarding their rights. According to her, by protecting intellectual property rights, businesses would have greater additional revenue, market competitiveness and image networking.

Darsej Riza, co-founder of the Digital School, said that years ago there was less awareness about this issue, but that nowadays, there are many opportunities to be educated about intellectual property protection.

“The protection of intellectual property is a minimal investment compared to its later value,” he added.

Kujtesa Nezaj Shehu, Lawyer, at the same time moderator of this forum, said that the difference between one company and other lies in products, services, and innovation, and that all of these can be protected by law.

### 3.16. No-Host talk at AmCham

**Prishtina, November 12, 2021**- During No-Host discussion between Dardan Sejdiu and Ramis Ahmetaj, various important topics on the entrepreneurial ecosystem were tackled.

Dardan Sejdiu, Consultant, talking about the culture of entrepreneurship, mentioned the lessons that come after failures, and our mentality as a community to make better use of this aspect. He also mentioned the fear of failures of young entrepreneurs and the protection offered by the state in case of any eventual failure. Regarding policies, he mentioned financing and filling of the gaps that enterprises have through companies or organizations.

Regarding markets, Sejdiu said that if there is a lack of ideas and there is room for growth, then the type of entrepreneurship has an important role. Further, he said that human resources remain the greatest asset.
and that they are the most important asset by attaching public administration and education for greater economic development.

Finance expert Ramis Ahmetaj said that the ecosystem itself contains elements such as culture, which plays a major role in the community, such as rejection and fear of failure. According to him, policies should encourage young entrepreneurs towards success.

“The more markets, the more developed the entrepreneurial ecosystem,” he said.

According to Ahmetaj, if we want to cross borders, then we must adapt to global markets and their demands, including digitalization. He further mentioned the difficulties of enterprises in their beginnings, specifying that bank loans take too long to be approved for businesses.

3.17. Shaqir Palushi: Money is not the main condition to start a business

Prishtina, November 12, 2021 - Under the moderation of Arian Zeka, executive director at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, the next forum was held with Shaqir Palushi, Founder of the company Frutex, who shared his success story within the Global Entrepreneurship Week.

Palushi mentioned difficulties, such as the lack of experience in manufacturing, lack of facility in manufacturing, lack of experts, technology, and transportation, as factors that have influenced the development of a business years ago.

He further said that it takes determination and commitment because there has been slow business growth since he started, given the community's skepticism about local manufacturers. As for today, he said that the freedom of movement outside Kosovo and the empowerment of companies have evolved over the years.

According to Palushi, young people should continue to stay in Kosovo and create new businesses because in Kosovo there is a good climate for entrepreneurship.

3.18. The work process is more important than the result and success itself

Prishtina, November 12, 2021 - Andina Vllahiu, Policy and Communications Manager at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and moderator of the forum stressed the importance of creativity and entrepreneurial skills as very important key factors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Doresa Rexha, actress and manager of GjirafaVideo said that it is important for individuals to use and test themselves, not necessarily in a certain field but wherever they can add value to society. Further, she said that entrepreneurship has taught her that action comes with learning.

Rexha stressed that “regarding youth and the departure of young people to European countries, together we can create something beautiful and make a difference.”

According to her, although Kosovo is a small and challenging country, there are many opportunities for professional development and growth, because it works and creates new opportunities which are achieved with the strength and ambition of each individual.

She encouraged young entrepreneurs to work as she considers it a good step for young people because it is fast-growing, it is challenging and it does not matter where you come from to start a business.

3.19. Behgjet Pacolli shared his challenging journey at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo

Prishtina, November 12, 2021– Behgjet Pacolli, businessman and politician was the next guest to speak at AmCham, in the framework of Global Entrepreneurship Week.

Behgjet Pacolli said that his starting point was in a small village, and that it is difficult to take a place in society and change the environment and adapt. He said that everyone has an important part in the
community and that the individual and environment are two entities that complement each other, and that it is important for these two factors to be in harmony to fulfill a certain function.

Pacolli further added that talking to others helps life experiences and that he has always received information and advice from others, therefore ‘the more cooperation you have with others, the safer the process’.

He recommended entrepreneurs to come together and form an association to discuss business, but sometimes lack of events and the right approach are missing in this regard.

“The culture of being an entrepreneur has not yet found support in Kosovo and the legal infrastructure should be as easy as possible for businesses, because the culture it is now, hinders the Kosovar entrepreneur,” he added.

3.20. Young people are encouraged to focus on the manufacturing industry

Prishtina, November 13, 2021 – To discuss about the manufacturing industry in Kosovo, challenges, and advantages, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized its next forum with private sector stakeholders.

Andrra Nurkollari, Policy and Communication Officer at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo said that the creation of new products from raw materials or components, and the end of war, has found the manufacturing industry in a difficult situation.

Sami Dida, the owner of the company Proton Cable, said that the reason he started to deal with manufacturing was that in the period when he started, the manufacturing industry was not developed, and in a way, he also challenged himself, as well as it gave him the desire to achieve something more during this period.

Gojart Kelmendi, owner and founder of the company EuroKosova said that he had no previous experience in the manufacturing industry and he had scarce knowledge since he had to take care of everything on his own.

‘Doing business in Kosovo has improved and nowadays it is much easier. The new generations find it much easier to deal with manufacturing,’ said Kelmendi.

3.21. Defining the long-term goal is vital in the success of young entrepreneurs

Prishtina, November 13, 2021 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, in cooperation with AAB College, organized the next forum with Ylber Kuraja, one of the best managers in Kosovo, moderated by Arianit Fazliu from the company Kutia.

Arian Zeka, executive director at the American Chamber of Commerce, in his introductory speech aims to encourage young people to listen to success stories, where in the future they will be able to apply this advice and avoid mistakes which have been made by prior people when achieving success.

Ylber Kuraja mentioned the beginnings of his career and how he had to work in a store, as a young man with no capital. According to him, today there are easier ways to achieve success, and it takes smart strategies, but also hard work, when it comes to greater achievements because according to him, the results do not come easy.

Kuraja said that complacency can be an obstacle to even greater achievement, thus everyone should come out of their comfort zone. “A successful manager is one who is willing to give more than he receives, and later this sacrifice will be rewarded,” stressed Kuraja.

Further, he recommended that young people have more connections and read more, and added that literature should focus on American and European standards and the future, and not literature with older models because many of the areas included in the literature today, should not be part of our teaching curricula.
According to him, there is no ideal manager, what is important is discipline and knowledge and facing reality, as well. He added that teamwork is vital to the success of the winners.

3.22. Kosovars have the entrepreneurial spirit in comparison to entrepreneurs in other countries

Prishtina, November 13, 2021 – Linda Shala, entrepreneur and vice-president of Women's Chamber of Commerce was the next guest to discuss the inclusion of women in entrepreneurship and young entrepreneurs in general.

Andina Vllahiu Kelmendi, Policy and Communications Manager at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo mentioned the challenges of women's participation in the Kosovo market in the past and even today.

Entrepreneur and vice president of the Women's Chamber of Commerce, Linda Shala talked about the challenges she had faced in the past and the difficult conditions, as well as the dismissal at a young age. She said that Kosovars have a developed entrepreneurial spirit compared to other countries who are still raising awareness to promote this. Shala said that young people should be more involved in their education, as well as in additional training, emphasizing that “entrepreneurship is a choice and when a person decides to make this choice requires greater commitment.”

3.23. Alternative ways are recommended in financing new businesses

Prishtina, November 13, 2021 – As a concluding part of the Global Entrepreneurship Week among the twenty-three activities organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, promoting the idea – financing entrepreneurs, has been the topic discussed during this last forum.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka stressed the importance of finance in supporting entrepreneurs to achieve success. He affirmed that the business idea is what matters, but the financial component also plays a similar role.

Artan Sadiku, Deputy Director at BPB Bank said that the objective of this bank is to support small businesses and aim to provide financial and non-financial services. He said that the bank will provide training to support entrepreneurs in advancing their business, strategic planning, marketing and inexperience. Further, he stated that the focus of the bank is women and young entrepreneurs.

EBRD Regional Policy Coordinator Leonora Kusari stated that startups need financial support because they mainly fund businesses, the community or through grants. She mentioned that Kosovo has great potential and a crowdfunding is planned to happen in Kosovo, as well. Kusari also recommended testing the market and creating an infrastructure for young people to come up with more innovative and creative ideas.

Driton Dalipi, managing partner at MDA claimed that a collaboration between the education system and the ministry that supports young entrepreneurs and municipalities would create a better ecosystem.

Erëza Gjikolli, Program Development Supervisor, Head Office, TEB bank, mentioned the bank’s support for women startups. According to her, there is a lack of information about entrepreneurs who intend to open a business and that they need to adapt to the needs of the market.

4. ARBITRATION

4.1. The establishment of the Commercial Court; a great help for the operation of small businesses

Prishtina, October 18, 2021 – The impact and benefits of establishing a Commercial Court for the private sector in Kosovo, as well as improving the investment climate, were some of the key points discussed.
during the business forum organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and USAID Commercial Justice Activity, with stakeholders from Kosovo Institutions, USAID and the private sector.

Doarsa Kica Xhelili, Member of Parliament and chairwoman of the working group at the Parliamentary Legislative Committee stressed the importance of establishing a Commercial Court and mentioned the facilitation of businesses after its formation. She said that as the chairwoman of this working group, she considers the adoption of the law on Commercial Court as essential for the country level and as a quick push and relief of disputes. Further, she mentioned the difficulty of the operation of small businesses, which were affected during the COVID19 pandemic. Kica Xhelili said that they are ready to move forward with the voting process for the establishment of this Court as soon as possible, always by taking into consideration the suggestions and comments of relevant institutions and organizations for the establishment and progress of this court.

Legal Adviser to the Prime Minister of Kosovo Tea Blakaj Hoxha mentioned the importance of this court. According to her, the Commercial Court will set an example for other courts for its management and functioning. In addition, she added that the new facility, with the establishment of this court, will increase the number of new judges and professional associates, “the Commercial Court increases transparency and accountability,” she said.

Chris Thompson, USAID Commercial Justice Activity Chief of Party, mentioned the importance of the Commercial Court in increasing jobs and creating adequate space for foreign and domestic investment in Kosovo. Thompson said that managing court difficulties overseen by the business community, assisting judges, reviewing cases between businesses and the Government, and addressing cases in a single address are some of the facilitations that the establishment of the Commercial Court would bring.

Ardi Shita, Lawyer from Shita & Ibrahimaga, at the same time the moderator of the business forum, said that there is no better solution to improve doing business in Kosovo rather than the establishment of the Commercial Court, and this applies not only to the state of Kosovo, but also to other countries of the region.

4.2. Gender equality increases trust in the system of justice institutions in Kosovo

Prishtina, November 24, 2021 – To discuss the importance and role of women’s injustice, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, jointly with the USAID Commercial Justice Activity has organized the Women in Commercial Justice event.

Gresa Caka-Nimani, President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kosovo said that women have continuously excelled in the field of commercial justice. According to her, women have stayed at the forefront of important reforms in this area. Caka Nimani said the composition of this forum is evidence that Kosovo is on the right track and that the development of justice in Kosovo has been a key priority, because beyond reforms, strengthening mechanisms that ensure sustainable economic development, is commercial justice. Caka Nimani said that women have stayed at the forefront of important reforms in this area, thus stressing that women's integration into public life and the private sector continues to be a challenge.

“Fundamental value with the Constitution is also gender equality in political, social and cultural life. Kosovo has passed the Law on Legal Equality, where 30% of women are represented in the Kosovo Assembly. Women have proved that they are deserving of representation in decision-making through the relevant successes,” said Caka Nimani.

USAID Kosovo Mission Director Zeinah Salahi said that in Kosovo 1/3 are women judges, asserting that women’s participation in legal professions offers high value to society. Salahi said that a new democracy, which characterizes the state of Kosovo, is a worthy commitment to improving justice. According to Salahi, USAID is focused on working for the commercial justice system in the rule of law, however, despite great achievements, women are largely represented in Kosovo.

Salahi stressed that “women’s participation in legal professions offers high value to society. More women should be encouraged to engage in legal processes for the rule of law.”
The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka said that in Kosovo the number of women judges is 33%, adding that increasing women’s participation affects increased confidence in the work of courts.

“For those of us representing the private sector we are notified of how important a justice system is. I believe that increasing women’s participation affects increased confidence in the work of the courts. In the United States, 34% of judges are women. The number of women judges in Kosovo is 33%,” Zeka said.

The member of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo Doarsa Kica Xhelili said almost all women have faced gender discrimination. She said the move from a lawyer to MPs has been unforeseen and that she has assessed that she has the potential to contribute as an MP. Further, Kica Xhelili said that in terms of commercial justice, he estimates that each of the women has faced gender discrimination.

Nita Shala, Deputy Minister of Justice, said successful women in the country have been successful for her examples. “Examples of success have served me too. I’ve been curious to learn about injustice. Vjosa Osmani was the first person to introduce me to the field of law. The other factor is the determination to see the challenges as an opportunity to face them,” stressed Shala.

Arjeta Sadiku, a member of the Kosovo Judicial Council, said her experience in the United States of America has served her to continue her journey in Kosovo. She said that as a lawyer, then even as a professional associate she met successful European judges who served in our country.

The head of the Basic Court in Prishtina, Albina Shabani Rama, said she enjoys the fact that women have taken leadership positions in different institutions, saying that the role of women is heard everywhere and that the very presence of women in the judicial system means it is diversified.

4.3. The Kosovo Arbitration Center marks a decade; there is a rise in the number of cases in the Arbitration Center

Prishtina, December 7, 2021—The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and USAID Commercial Justice Activity organized the “10 Years of Arbitration in Kosovo” event. For ten years, Kosovo businesses have had access to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, provided by two institutions in Kosovo, including the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

In his introductory speech, the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka emphasized the significance of this moment, mentioning the arbitration center as an alternative form for resolving disputes efficiently.

Furthermore, while speaking of the chronology of the functionalization, successes and difficulties of the arbitration center over the years, he said that the cases that are arriving at the arbitration center are increasing over the years.

While, Christine Danton, Director of the Office for Democracy and Governance of USAID said that Kosovo has made continuous progress, despite the fact that it is still a new democracy.

She added that they support the arbitration center and that arbitration strengthens law enforcement. According to her, there is a positive trend of increasing cases of businesses seeking dispute resolution in the arbitration center, adding that in 2019 were 17% of businesses seeking resolution of cases in the arbitration center, while in 2021, this percentage has grown to 35%. Finally, she encouraged gender equality in commercial justice to increase trust in the justice system of Kosovo institutions.

Christopher Thompson, USAID Commercial Justice Program Leader, outlined the advantages of the arbitration center, highlighting procedures that are simpler and faster compared to courts where dispute resolution cases take years to be solved. He added that the arbitrators selected at the arbitration center are experts in the field and the arbitration center has its own rules and administration.

Meanwhile, Sokol Elmazaj, Partner, Boga & Associates, Chairman of the Arbitration Center of the American Chamber, Steering Council, sharing the journey of the arbitration center mentioned the training of
arbimators in the first years of operation of the arbitration center, and that despite the skepticism that was in the first years, things went right. Moreover, he mentioned the contribution of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in promoting the arbitration center. "The speed, confidentiality and flexibility of dispute resolution procedures are the advantages of the arbitration center in comparison to the courts," Elmazaj added.

Ardi Shita, Lawyer, First Secretary General of the American Chamber of Arbitration Center mentioned the difficulties of the beginning of commercial justice which until then has been unknown to the Albanian community "Arbitration rules are one of the best in Europe, where dispute resolution procedures do not take long because they are fast and efficient," he added.

5. COMMERCIAL JUSTICE DAYS: ARBITRATION IN FOCUS

5.1. AmCham and USAID Commercial Justice Activity organize Arbitration Week

Prishtina, March 30, 2021 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and USAID Commercial Justice Activity have begun Arbitration Week, with the goal of promoting arbitration as a fast and effective alternative method for resolving commercial disputes. This week will be marked through virtual forums that address a variety of arbitration-related topics, such as third-party funding, arbitration in developing countries, and low-cost arbitration.

This week’s opening event addressed the topic of third-party funding for businesses interested in choosing arbitration, with a panel of lawyers and arbitrators from Kosovo, the U.S., the UK, and Turkey. This event was moderated by the Secretary-General of the Arbitration Center of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Tea Blakaj-Hoxha.

As a panelist, Attorney Fisnik Salihu from RPHS Law noted that in Kosovo the court still enjoys the primary role in resolving commercial disputes, while there are a number of cases awaiting its decision, and the average time for resolving a case is from three to five years. According to Salihu, despite the fact that the business community usually has reservations about the inclusion of arbitration clauses in contracts, there has recently been an increased interest in this process, given that arbitration is a much faster, effective, and professional mechanism for commercial disputes resolutions compared to the court.

Attorney Taulant Hodaj from Hodaj & Partners, added that in general arbitration helps the Kosovo system and it should be promoted as much as possible. Although according to Hodaj the practice of arbitration is still new in the country, the benefits of this mechanism are numerous, especially given the fact that arbitrators are professionals and experts in relevant matters, and are not general judges.

Another member of this panel was Ayse Lowe, Director at one of the largest and leading litigation funders in London, Bench Walk Advisors, who spoke on various aspects of third-party funding, noting that the use of the latter is on the rise especially in cases of arbitration. Lowe described third-party funding as a very important opportunity, which enables everyone to access justice.

On the other hand, Attorney Orçun Çetinkaya from the company Çetinkaya in Turkey, spoke about the development of arbitration in this country, specifying that arbitration is a very efficient and fast method compared to the court. According to him, in this country arbitration is used at large by companies in some sectors, such as energy, infrastructure, and construction, however, greater promotion of arbitration is needed for other sectors.

At last, Jason Emert, Attorney, and President of U.S. Company Emert Group, as well as to Arbitrator at AmCham Arbitration Center, re-emphasized the benefits of arbitration for resolving commercial disputes, and the importance of third-party financing for arbitration costs.

5.2. Representation of women in arbitration is necessary for increased professionalism and quality
Prishtina, March 31, 2021 – As part of the Arbitration Week organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Commercial Justice Activity, during the second day of this week, through a virtual forum, the reasons behind low representation of women in arbitration, including the challenges they face in this process, as well as opportunities to increase their representation as arbitrators were discussed. The issue of under-representation of women in arbitration exists not only in Kosovo, but globally.

During this forum, the Secretary General of AmCham Arbitration Center, Tea Blakaj-Hoxha, noted that this institution is in the process of updating the list of arbitrators, as well as amending the rules of operation of the Steering Council so that actions that promote as much participation of women in arbitration as possible are taken.

The Deputy Chief of Party of USAID Commercial Justice Activity, Vjosa Shkodra, was also part of the panel for this discussion. Shkodra highlighted the activities of this program in general, as well as the cooperation with AmCham in promoting arbitration in specific, noting the impact of the latter in the general increase in interest in commercial justice. Shkodra stated that the representation of women in arbitration is still small, not only in Kosovo but all over the world, however, it is important to focus on this topic and inform legal professionals about opportunities to get involved in arbitration. Shkodra said that the USAID Commercial Justice Activity currently has an internship program, referred to as the Commercial Law Academy, noting that women dominate in terms of interest for getting involved in the program.

Whereas, Attorney Erblina Krasniqi Prishtina, said that arbitration is an institution that is recently being promoted in Kosovo, while highlighting that as a lawyer, she has been recommending businesses to include arbitration clauses in their contracts for a long time. According to Krasniqi Prishtina, there is an increase in the involvement of women in arbitration, or in the field of jurisprudence, both internationally and locally, but still the number is not large in proportion to men. She considered that the release of statistics on women practicing the profession would be very necessary, so as to see how many women we have focused on either the field of advocacy practice or other alternative methods.

5.3. Arbitration enables commercial dispute resolution in a professional manner supported by experts

Prishtina, April 1, 2021 – During the third day of Arbitration Week, an activity organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Commercial Justice Activity, the topic of arbitration in developing countries was discussed. A very fruitful discussion on this process took place with panelists from the local and international arbitration community, during which the benefits of arbitration in general as an alternative method for resolving disputes in developing countries, which are commonly dealing with a weak rule of law, were especially discussed.

This discussion was moderated by the Secretary General of AmCham Arbitration Center, Tea Blakaj-Hoxha, who among other things mentioned that the courts in Kosovo are very functional in recognizing arbitral awards, and the judges of the Department of Economic Affairs are very familiar with arbitration.

Part of the panel for this discussion was the Chief of Party of USAID Commercial Justice Activity, who called on those watching the event to be curious about arbitration and to research on the benefits it has compared to the court, as well as to include the arbitration clause in their contracts as much as possible. Thompson noted the overall support USAID offers for improving the rule of law for economies in transition, while also mentioning the different activities he leads in Kosovo, in support of the development of commercial justice. He stated that the usage of arbitration is very important, since it is a cost effective method, much faster than the court.

Another speaker in this panel was Michael Gold, Managing Director at Crimson Capital, committed to supporting alternative dispute resolution methods in several developing countries in Europe, Africa and Latin America, who said that arbitration is a very effective method of resolving disputes quickly and definitively. Gold emphasized that he himself has been a user of arbitration in Kosovo, and described it as a very efficient and reliable process. Speaking about his experience with other developing countries regarding arbitration, Gold noted that he has encountered resistance from judges to accept arbitration, as
they have believed that this process will reduce their authority. However, according to Gold, this is not the case, because arbitration only facilitates the work of courts which are usually overburdened.

Whereas, for a local perspective, panelist Sokol Elmazaj, attorney and chairperson of the Steering Council of AmCham Arbitration Center, stated that in order to guarantee a smooth running of this center, the steering council takes care of electing the best arbitrators, so that they are professionals, with wide experience in the field they operate, as well as people with integrity. Elmazaj considered that compared to Albania, Kosovo is much more advanced in terms of arbitration, while also noting that attorneys play a crucial role in promoting arbitration and recommending it to relevant stakeholders.

5.4. **Arbitration costs are much more efficient compared to court proceedings**

*Prishtina, April 2, 2021 –* During the fourth and concluding day of Arbitration Week, an activity organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and USAID Commercial Justice Activity, low-cost arbitration and its funding opportunities were discussed. A very informative discussion on this topic was held with local lawyers, where, among other things, the role of the latter in advising businesses on the inclusion of arbitration clause in contractual relations was discussed, and the fact that arbitration costs are much more efficient compared to court proceedings, which are usually too lengthy due to court overload was emphasized.

This event was moderated by the Secretary-General of AmCham Arbitration Center, Tea Blakaj Hoxha. Whereas, AmCham Executive Director, Arian Zeka, in opening remarks for this event said that due to the unsatisfactory efficiency of the courts in handling commercial cases, AmCham has continuously encouraged businesses to use alternative dispute resolution methods, including arbitration.

Part of the panel for this discussion was the attorney Ardi Shita from the company Shita and Ibrahimaga, as well as a Member of the Steering Council of AmCham Arbitration Center. Shita noted that the establishment of a commercial court is crucial for the implementation of low-cost arbitration, especially due to the delays in recognition and permitting of execution of arbitral awards by the Department of Economic Affairs. According to Shita, a court that would deal with all commercial aspects would be very helpful in pushing arbitration towards empowerment and development.

Another speaker of the panel was the attorney Visar Ramaj from the company RPHS Law, who stated that for any business, the cost is one of the main factors in deciding on whether to select arbitration or the court for resolving disputes. According to Ramaj, the costs of arbitration generally include the cost of predictability of the final result, the cost of lawyers involved, the procedural cost of the institution involved, and the cost of arbitrators. However, Ramaj highlighted that arbitration has incomparable advantages in relation to the court because it guarantees confidentiality, swiftness, as well as control of the parties over the aspect of the procedural development of the case.

Whereas, attorney Korab Sejdiu, during this discussion said that in countries like Kosovo where the judicial system is not complete, or not quite sophisticated, and there are high expectations for the handling of cases by the court, in the commercial context, business entities should automatically resolve their disputes through arbitration. According to Sejdiu, arbitration was initially created so that commercial disputes can be resolved as quickly as possible and at the lowest possible cost.

6. **STATEMENTS AND POSITIONS**

6.1. **The Assembly to take an urgent decision to postpone energy market liberalization**

*Prishtina, March 25, 2021 –* Following the constitution of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, and the Council of European Investors call on the Presidency of the Assembly and members of the new legislature to urgently address the issue of the transition of commercial customers to the voltage level of 35 kV and 10 kV in the free market of energy supply, respectively, the legal obligation to provide a suitable operator for electricity supply with non-regulated tariffs beginning April 1, 2021.
While in ideal circumstances, the liberalization of the energy market would bring benefits to consumers in the market, in the case of Kosovo, this is impossible for many years, because, despite the licensing of some operators, only one of them has the capacity to function in practice as a supplier of last resort.

In such circumstances, combined with the fact that the Energy Regulatory Office does not have a functioning Board, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce and the Council of European Investors request from the members of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo that before March 31, 2021, they use the legal possibilities for the postponement of the above-mentioned transition, until the creation of real opportunities which would enable the functional liberalization of the energy market.

In the conditions of a limited supply, and when there is a real possibility that the only operator with market supply capacity can abuse the dominant position, commercial consumers, mainly the manufacturing enterprises in the country, will have limited bargaining power, and consequently offers of significantly higher tariffs for energy supply. For many industries in Kosovo, electricity costs account for a large percentage of operating costs, which would further reduce their comparative advantages over manufacturers in other countries in the region, thus increasing competitive pressure on them.

Possible delay in decision-making by lawmakers would threaten the operations of the aforementioned enterprises and prompt them to seek further investment opportunities in countries in the region, where energy tariffs for commercial consumers are more favorable than in Kosovo, as long as these customers also subsidize the tariffs of residential or household customers. This would be contrary to the overall commitments to strengthen the domestic manufacturing sector and maintain sustainable jobs.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, and the European Investors Council reiterate their concern that from the preliminary offers received by companies to move to the free market, a tariff increase of 30-40% is clearly noticed, while expressed in monetary terms, it means that a company that currently pays an annual bill of 1 million euros, after moving to the liberalized energy market will have to pay an additional 300,000-400,000 euros. And, as stated quite at the beginning, this would be contrary to the benefits that would result from switching to a free market.

6.2. New government to start drafting a national economic development strategy

Prishtinë, April 20, 2021 – Economic development based on a strategic approach is essential for enabling measurable and sustainable economic growth. Therefore, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo requires the Government of the Republic of Kosovo to draft a strategic document as a guiding document for economic development policies.

The National Economic Development Strategy should be initiated in the first quarter of the new Government and should be based on an analysis of economic potentials and priorities, and among other things it would guide the private sector in making strategic decisions. The strategic document would serve to avoid the ad-hoc decisions or reactive approach that has characterized institutional decision-making in the past. In this way, the Government, the Assembly, as well as other non-political and non-governmental stakeholders would be able to establish control over Kosovo’s economic development, setting specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound objectives.

The American Chamber strongly believes that priorities such as strengthening the rule of law, addressing issues related to human capital, strengthening ties with the diaspora, promoting domestic investment and attracting foreign investment, and addressing physical infrastructure with a focus on energy infrastructure, should necessarily be included in the Strategy, whereas its drafting should be carried out in close consultation with representatives of the business community, experts and economic institutes, academic institutions, international development organizations and international financial institutions, as well as representatives of trade unions.

Finally, the American Chamber of Commerce suggests that the strategy drafting process should take into consideration, but not be limited to factors such as economic and demographic data, Kosovo’s natural resources, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and local and global trends, as well as technological developments.
6.3. The American Chamber of Commerce welcomes the approval of the Draft Law on the Establishment of the Commercial Court

Prishtina, June 30, 2021 – Strengthening the rule of law in general and the use of commercial justice, and in this regard increasing the efficiency in the implementation of the contract are the precondition of attracting internal and external investments.

Therefore, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, positively evaluates the approval by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo, of the Draft Law on the Establishment of the Commercial Court.

AmCham estimates that such a decision of the Government of Kosovo will inevitably affect the increase of legal certainty in doing business, improving the investment climate, and consequently the image of Kosovo before foreign investors.

As a response to the proposal of the American Chamber of Commerce since 2016 for the establishment of a special court which would effectively and professionally deal with disputes of a commercial nature, the approval of the Draft Law by the Government, also contributes to the advancement of the public-private dialogue.

Finally, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo calls upon the Ministry of Justice to conclude the Functional Review of the Rule of Law Sector, and in this regard the approval of the country’s Rule of Law Strategy.

6.4. AmCham calls for a higher legislative dynamic for an investment inductive environment

Prishtina, September 29, 2021 – The continuous reformation of the legal framework in line with private sector recommendations is a prerequisite for an inductive environment for domestic investments and attractive to foreign investments. The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo urges the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo to pursue a dynamic legislative agenda, accelerating the drafting and adoption of the legal acts for the much-needed reforms.

AmCham recalls that due to the lack of political stability of the government in the recent years, a number of important legal acts have remained pending for adoption by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo for more than two years, such as the case with tax legislation, the one under electronic signature, and the establishment of the commercial court.

AmCham also believes that with the purpose of avoiding further deterioration of the negative perception that exists among foreign investors, a priority reviewing of applications for the status of strategic investor is needed. Foreign direct investments are important for the establishment of sustainable jobs and accelerated economic growth. Therefore, improvement of the offer, reduction of bureaucratic procedures, and shortening of processing times of investor inquiries are paramount in promoting the image of Kosovo as a country open to investors.

The American Chamber of Commerce believes that the country's legal framework should also reflect the new circumstances following the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic, not only to respond properly to the difficulties the private sector is facing but also to address new global economic trends.

Lastly, the American Chamber of Commerce calls on the Government and the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, to strengthen dialogue with representatives of the private sector through existing mechanisms, as this provides for the addressing of recommendations of the private sector, and betterment of the investment climate.

6.5. AmCham calls upon companies in Kosovo to avoid discriminatory actions

Prishtina, November 22, 2021 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo expresses its concerns regarding yesterday’s report of discriminatory treatment on members of certain community by employees of an economic operator.
AmCham recalls that non-discriminatory treatment is a constitutional obligation for all in Kosovo, whereas inclusive and non-discriminatory service practices should also be part of the active demonstration of corporate social responsibility values, and as such, should be respected at all times by all enterprises in Kosovo.

Therefore, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo calls on all enterprises in Kosovo to avoid actions that may suggest discrimination or exclusion from the right of service on any grounds.

6.6. STUDIES
6.7. Study on impact of Production Competitiveness Index 2021
6.8. Study on Foreign Direct Investment in Kosovo
6.9. Corruption Perception Study

7. FOUNDATION

7.1. Assistance to Mehreme Goliqi

Mehreme Goliqi was assisted with a laptop, printer, paper sheets to write on, desk, cabinet, as well as book publishing.

7.2. Assistance to Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian children

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children were supported with bags full of school equipment.

7.3. Assistance to Afghan Refugees

Afghan refugees were helped with different goods that AmCham members have donated such as clothes, equipment, cigarettes etc.

7.4. AmCham together with President Jahjaga, give presents to visually impaired children in Peja

Prishtina, December 6, 2021 – The former President of the Republic of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, and the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, visited the Resource Center “Xheladin Deda” for Education and Counselling in Peja, to distribute end-of-year gifts for visually impaired children, attending the Center.

Former President Jahjaga and AmCham Executive Director, Arian Zeka, had the chance to talk to the children, the school staff, the children’s parents, as well as get to know about the Center’s plans directly from its director.

The children also performed a heartfelt artistic program with poems, songs, and piano recitals for the guests, which they had prepared themselves, with the help of their teachers.