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AmCham’s Yearbook published

Prishtina, January 17, 2022 – AmCham published its first Yearbook, which is a compilation of AmCham’s events, activities, meetings, and studies throughout the year. AmCham aims to make this publication a traditional one.

Members of the Tax and Legal Affairs Committees held a meeting with the General Director of TAK

Prishtina, January 18, 2022 – Today, at the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, the General Director of TAK, Ilir Murtezaj held a meeting with members of Tax and Legal Committees to discuss new reforms in TAK and the challenges for 2022.

The members of the committees presented many requests and recommendations addressed to Mr. Murtezaj, while Mr. Murtezaj said that he feels honored to participate in such conversations to discuss issues of TAK and the business community in general. Murtezaj said that TAK, as an institution, has evolved a lot by mentioning the work that has been done in creating real-time services for each taxpayer. Furthermore, he said that based on the new budget law, TAK has a duty to collect 680 million euros in revenues in 2022, which is, 22% more than last year.

Further on, he mentioned the reforms that TAK had taken during these years and the new fiscal cash register on transferring information through the online system. He also mentioned informal employment and the consequences for the employee and the employer, in case there is no employment contract. Members welcomed the news that the cost and maintenance of fiscal cash registers will be changed by TAK.

Members mentioned the administrative instructions as well that should be reviewed according to them, as well as the lack of technical aspects to further facilitate the processes in TAK, reporting of financial statements, cryptocurrencies, and their production, and many other aspects.

AmCham organized the annual meeting of the General Assembly

Prishtina, January 20, 2022- Strengthening and deepening our economic ties and commercial relations, which will result in greater prosperity for Americans and Kosovans is among the highest priorities of the new U.S. Ambassador in Kosovo, Jeff Hovenier.

Speaking at the Annual Meeting of the General Assembly, Ambassador Hovenier said that 2021 was a good year for the Kosovo economy and that the private sector is the key driver of economic growth. He emphasized the importance of a dynamic and vibrant private sector, as well as the need to strengthen dialogue with the business community, and to leverage the investment power of the diaspora.

“One of our Embassy’s top priorities is supporting Kosovo’s European and Euro-Atlantic trajectory. Kosovo is a small market on its own, but it has the potential to be a hub for trade and investment in southeast Europe,” said Ambassador Hovenier, adding that the U.S. Embassy supports initiatives that create more efficient cross-border trade and lead to a more competitive and inclusive Kosovan economy.
In addition, the U.S. Ambassador said that while the public sector is great at achieving many goals, it is important to step away from certain sectors of the economy and let the private sector do what it does best.

Lastly, Ambassador Hovenier called upon the companies in Kosovo to promote and enforce mitigation measures like masks, social distancing, and vaccination among their staff and customers, as the Omicron variant is present and spreading rapidly in Kosovo.

The outgoing President of the Board of Governors of AmCham Kosovo Ilir Ibrahimi expressed his gratitude to all the members, the U.S. Embassy, and the Executive Director and his team for the continuous support and cooperation throughout the years. Ibrahimi said that despite the frequent changes in the Government, AmCham remained firm on its position by always offering to be a partner with every government, but never compromise in advocating and fighting for its members. He also said that with its 210 members, AmCham proudly enjoys the reputation of a professional and strong business association.

The Executive Director of AmCham Kosovo Arian Zeka said that over the last decade, the organization has grown over three times in terms of membership, finances and staff, adding that the more powerful it became over the years the more it understood that it is vitally important to remain true to the values and principles of U.S. Chamber of Commerce as well as to the individual values that everyone at AmCham represents. He thanked the outgoing Board members for their guidance and oversight, the staff of AmCham for their hard work, the U.S. Embassy for their support and Kosovo’s institutions for their partnership.

The 140 delegates of the General Assembly of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo elected the new Board of Governors and approved the 2022 Annual Program and the Supporting Budget. For the first time in the eighteen-year existence of AmCham Kosovo, Afrore Rudi from Deloitte is elected as the first female President of the Board of Governors.
Basic knowledge and Staff Education regarding the Intellectual Property are considered essential aspects for Businesses and their Operation

Prishtina, January 25, 2022 – Intellectual property for businesses and its significance were the key topics that were addressed in today’s training held by Kujteza Nezaj Shehu.

Kujtesa Nezaj Shehu, Head of Office – Attorney at Law, SDP Kosovë, claimed that the purpose of this training is for businesses to put in practice their strategies for the protection of intellectual property rights and the steps that need to be considered before doing so. To create a successful Intellectual Property strategy, businesses should have basic knowledge in regards to these rights, as according to her, businesses are hesitant about the types of Intellectual Property rights or the proper usage of terminologies related to these rights.

Furthermore, during today’s training, she recommended businesses to be more informed and have basic knowledge before starting their businesses, as well as educating their staff about intellectual property. While mentioning the types of Intellectual Property Rights such as; copyright which includes how the idea, creativity, videos, database of a business are expressed, that are afterwards recognized as original at the time of their creation.

The other type of intellectual property protection are trademarks that are protected by their logo, product name, and so forth. Industrial design is also one of the types of intellectual property protection that includes the aesthetic appearance of the product or its design and is valid for 25 years. Another type of Intellectual Property Protection is the patent, which is defined as a document issued by the industrial property agency through which a person or business that has invented a product or service is granted with patent rights in relation to that particular invention which must be innovative and has a duration of 20 years from the date of application.

Kosovo Customs: US to become Kosovo’s main export market

Prishtina, January 28, 2022 – In the meeting held with the members of the committees of the American Chamber of Commerce, the General Director of Kosovo Customs Agron Llugaliu said that the communication between the institution he leads and businesses is always welcome, adding that suggestions and recommendations from businesses are important for this institution. General Director Llugaliu stressed that in 2021, the United States of America has already become the main export market of Kosovo.

“One of the main strategic objectives of customs is the facilitation of trade in which there has been significant progress last year, however, there are always issues that need more focus,” said the director of customs, Agron Llugaliu, adding that Customs aims to set new standards in relation to manufacturers’ requests, which will receive a response within two weeks regarding authorizations. Regarding foreign investments, Director Llugaliu said that recently there is great interest from foreign investors for cooperation with Kosovo manufacturers. He added that customs are available and open to all requests, so investors do not encounter obstacles or barriers in Kosovo.

Throughout the meeting, there were also discussions of many important aspects related to those which are considered essential for the operation of businesses, including increasing cooperation to combat the informal economy.
AmCham establishes the Women in Energy and Mining Committee

Prishtina, February 4, 2022 – With the initiative of women professionals engaged in the energy and mining sector, AmCham establishes the Women in Energy and Mining Committee.

This committee was established in order to provide a platform for women from the above-mentioned sectors to discuss problems, energy-related issues, gather ideas and recommendations for relevant institutions.

Women from the private, public, academia, and international organizations were present at the inaugural meeting of the Women in Energy and Mining Committee.

The next steps, setting of objectives, and the need for promotion in order to include as many women as possible in the activities of the committee were some of the key points discussed during this meeting.

The role of the Assembly in advancing legislation to facilitate the activity of doing business

Prishtina, February 7, 2022 – The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, through its members of parliament and parliamentary committees can improve the quality of the content of the legislation of the Republic of Kosovo, by undertaking new legal initiatives or draft laws processed by the executive, while the comments of business organizations or the private sector are directly welcome in this regard.

This was said during a discussion between the members of the Parliamentary Committee on Economy, Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade and members of the American Chamber of
Commerce in Kosovo, where the concerns of the private sector representatives, regarding the environment of doing business, were discussed, as well as their recommendations to overcome them.

The Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Economy Ferat Shala presented a summary of the work of the Committee, as well as the next legislative plan, and pledged to further improve the ease of doing business, which will strengthen the private sector and make Kosovo more attractive in the eyes of domestic and foreign investors. Shala stressed that members of the Parliament, as well as the Parliamentary Committee, have been open and cooperative with the American Chamber of Commerce and that this will continue in the future.

Jeta Statovci, Member of the Parliament and vice-chair said that this Committee is working with great dedication to create an environment as friendly as possible for local businesses and attract international investors, who would directly contribute to enhancing the socio-economic development of the country. Statovci also discussed the development and strengthening of the private sector in Kosovo, thus revealing the legislative work done so far and the steps in the future, in order to facilitate the activity of doing business in Kosovo.

Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Member of the Parliament and member of this Committee spoke on the draft law on cryptology, thus calling upon suggestions and offering collaboration in the composing of this draft law. Kusari Lila especially stressed the state of energy and the government subsidies, as a result of rising energy prices in the country.

Driton Hyseni, Member of the Parliament and member of this Committee said that the issue of market liberalization holds a special focus on the energy strategy in our country, as no deadline has been set for this.

Participants from the private sector mentioned the possibility of passing a separate law on the loss of goods, the law on pharmaceutical manufacturers, and the law on investments and investment funds.

**AmCham established the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Committee**

*Prishtina, February 8, 2022 –* The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo held today the inaugural meeting of the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Committee. The committee will interalia address the specific issues of the companies of this sector and promote companies in particular and the entire industry in general. The members of the new committee spoke about the importance of establishing this committee and said that it includes, not only the sector of information technology and/or services, but also carries many other aspects and areas of better promotion of the country.

The objectives, which among other things include recommendations and improvement of legal aspects and the promotion and good image of businesses operating in this field were discussed during the inaugural meeting. Members also elected Fatos Ameti from Sonnecto, as the chair and Shpresa Kika from Sutherland as vice-chair, with a one-year mandate.
EBRD Funding Priorities: Environment and corporate governance

Prishtina, February 9, 2022 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a forum with representatives from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and financial experts to discuss funding priorities for 2022 and the impact of foreign investment on the country’s economic development.

Neil Taylor, Head of the EBRD Office for Kosovo said that there is a gap in infrastructure between the public and private sector, as is the case in most European countries, while since 2012 the EBRD activity has increased by half billion euros of investments in Kosovo.

“We will continue to help businesses overcome the COVID19 pandemic crisis, given that the foundation of Kosovo's economy is still developing and, in which, the informal economy stands at around 40%, which is considered a massive problem for the operation of businesses,” said Taylor.

Speaking about foreign investment, Taylor said he would like to see more investments in Kosovo, by also mentioning the energy crisis as one of the main problems that businesses will face not only this year, but also in the coming years.
Minister Hajdari offers her cooperation with the private sector

Prishtina, February 12, 2022 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo held a roundtable discussion with stakeholders from state institutions and the private sector to discuss the strengthening of dialogue between the public-private sector and the 2022 priorities.

The Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade Rozeta Hajdari said that the Government program includes objectives of the ministry she leads, such as increasing the competitiveness of local companies given that our country is an alternative supplier to foreign investors, increasing the infrastructure of quality, sustainable development through tourism, innovation and entrepreneurship as an inherited fragile system, and supporting and promoting investment-oriented businesses. Minister Hajdari further said that without the help of the private sector, these objectives will not be possible.

Minister Hajdari particularly emphasized the Law on Strategic and Foreign investments, saying that this law will provide a unified approach in doing business in Kosovo, but also to create equality for all local investors. "In particular, the strategic and foreign investments law should be emphasized, which will be included as a single law and will offer the possibility of direct negotiations with the Government," said Hajdari.

Getoar Mjeku, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, encouraged all participants to contribute with comments on the administrative instructions, saying that the contribution of the private sector helps many institutions in decision-making. Participants from the private sector highlighted some of their concerns which are related to industrial zones, customs zones, and the facilitation of export financing.
AmCham expresses its concern over Kosovo’s ranking in Economic Freedom Index

Prishtina, February 16, 2022 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo expresses its concern over the deteriorated ranking of Kosovo in the Heritage Foundation’s 2022 Economic Freedom Index, with Kosovo’s overall score being below the regional average.

At a time when Kosovo desperately needs to encourage and attract domestic and foreign investments, Kosovo’s low economic freedom score demonstrates the necessity of an active approach the country’s institutions must take to address the issues pertaining the rule of law, government size and regulatory efficiency indicators, with focus on property rights, judicial effectiveness, government integrity, tax burden, government spending, fiscal health, business freedom and labor freedom.

AmCham Kosovo is particularly concerned over the five-year trend of declining economic freedom, with the country falling in the bottom of the category of “Moderately Free” countries, as well as the inappropriate response of the government to the COVID19 crisis in terms of stringency, with Kosovo being ranked 91st globally. A concern which was permanently raised by AmCham and other private sector organizations in the country.

Therefore, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo calls on the Government of Kosovo to pursue an active economic development agenda by urgently addressing the low-ranking indicators. By voicing its concern over the fact that the dialoguing mechanisms such as the National Council on Economy and Investments have not met in over a year, AmCham urges the Government to maintain an active public-private dialogue that would inter alia benefit the country and its economic progress.

Kosovo should consider transitioning into sustainable economy in favor of ESG

Prishtina, February 16, 2022 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo held a roundtable discussion on sustainable financing, which refers to the process of taking environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations into account when making funding decisions.

The CEO of Raiffeisen Bank, Anita Kovacic said that this transition is a joint responsibility of all financial institutions. It is important to be aware of the impact this topic has, mainly because of why it is good for the people, for the planet and for the profit. Kovacic said that sustainability brings progress for our future generations, which can help us in the economic development, since it helps businesses last for a longer period of time.

Kovacic said that educating clients, the public and raising awareness are more than necessary, stressing that “Our clients understand that once they are sustainable, they will have higher possibilities to repay or renegotiate any deal. Whether it is five months or five years from now, they might get an exit strategy for certain businesses, which is why once you build a solid foundation, you can always build on.”

Member of the Managing Board of ProCredit Bank Visar Paçarada believes that sustainability is the key to developing the country’s economy. Paçarada said that financial sustainability means how financial institutions incorporate ESGs in their companies and the key decisions they make for their investment activities.

Paçarada said that the main goal is the development of the economy in a sustainable way, since the development of the economy should not happen at the cost of environmental and social degradation, therefore, sustainability is the key to solving this.
The importance of an uninfluenced competition in doing business

Prishtina, February 22, 2022 – The American Chamber of Commerce held a roundtable discussion on creating an equal environment for all with stakeholders from state institutions and the private sector.

Mahir Tutuli, Judge at the Court of Appeal, pointed out that since the decisions of the Competition Authority are administrative acts, cases that go to court for competition violations are handled in the administrative court, which according to him is wrong, as this issue is an economic issue and should be dealt by economic courts. However, he said that with the establishment of the Commercial Court, cases of competition violations will be handled by this court itself, and as a result, the procedures will be faster and more effective.

Sakip Imeri, General Director at the Kosovo Competition Authority said that good and unhindered competition by external factors is of great importance for businesses. He said that the role of the Kosovo Competition Authority is to protect free competition, on the principle that competition between businesses is clean and consequently, through innovation and quality, to achieve customer satisfaction. Imeri said that dissatisfaction arises when the balance of equality is disturbed by favoring some businesses by state institutions, thus emphasizing that the role of the KCA is to give opinions on these issues, but this institution has no executive role.

Director of Vllesa RIA Gani Sallauka stressed that the unequal treatment between state-owned enterprises and the private sector is a very demoralizing factor for the private sector itself. Sallauka said that private companies also operate in Kosovo and should be protected and treated as equals.

TAK offers cooperation to AmCham’s Tax Committee members

Prishtina, February 23, 2022 – The Tax Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce held its next meeting, part of which, as an external expert will be the representative from the Tax Administration of Kosovo Sami Salihu.

Sami Salihu, Director of the Department for Registration and Taxpayer Services at Tax Administration of Kosovo expressed his readiness and that of the TAK to cooperate with businesses and said that they are ready to offer their full contribution and advice on any innovations or changes that may be in the interest of the business sector. Salihu further said that the American Chamber of Commerce, its members, and all taxpayers are considered close partners and that such discussions between TAK and taxpayers can serve the benefit of businesses. He added that the partnership between the two parties will lead and assist in identifying problems and the easiest and fastest solution of these problems.

In this meeting, the members of this committee expressed their concerns regarding the control of the Tax Administration and the legislation and administrative instructions by giving their recommendations. Furthermore, in this meeting, the 2022 objectives of this committee were also discussed.
Discussion between ASHI and AmCham’s Digital Economy Committee

*Prishtina, February 23, 2022* – Digital Economy Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce and the Agency for Information Society discussed the possibility of economic digitalization in state institutions and the possibility of a partnership between the private and public sectors.

Kujtim Gashi, General Director of the Information Society Agency (ASHI) explained how other state institutions take the digital economy for granted, but nevertheless, with the various activities of digitalized companies, and with the help of ASHI, there is sufficient proof for the development of national and international digitalization, therefore the transformation of state administration and public policies are highly dependent on the development of information technology. “*E-Kosovo is the best system construction pyramid in terms of digital transformation,*” he said.

Astrit Leti, Director of Operations for Kosovo at Tive mentioned the activity of the committee as very positive for the country, while the digital economy is a very broad topic in many areas and aspects that affect every industry. Leti believed that with the help of the American Chamber of Commerce and ASHI as a background, there should be advocacy for the postponement of some important processes, in order to help this committee raise issues at the national level. Leti believes that every company representative on this committee is challenged similarly to human resources, as companies have begun to open their own academies, so that they can develop their staff and expertise and, ultimately, the company itself.

The members of this committee also discussed the e-Kosovo platform, resource systems, electronic signature, which has entered into force and is being implemented, and other important issues of the digital economy sector.

Commercial Court, a factor that can make doing business in Kosovo easier

*Prishtina, February 24, 2022* - The American Chamber of Commerce organized a discussion forum for the approval of the law establishing the Commercial Court, where issues of the human and budgetary nature of this court were addressed.

Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce Arian Zeka said that the idea for the establishment of this court came from the American Chamber of Commerce in 2016 and they are happy that the Kurti government has supported the establishment of this court. He said that having a special judicial mechanism where disputes of a commercial nature are handled, enables the handling of these disputes more efficiently. He stressed that expectations for the commercial court are high, so any delay in the operation of this court can produce great disappointment.

Deputy Minister of Justice Blerim Sallahu said that this court will initially have 15 judges, nine of whom will be in the first instance and six will be in the second instance. Sallahu shared with those present that they are in negotiations with the Ministry of Finance, to allocate an additional budget to increase the current number of judges, when the re-evaluation of the budget of the Republic of Kosovo in June is done. This, as a result, would increase the quality and efficiency of resolving cases in this court, he added. He describes the law on the establishment of the Commercial Court as a law that will increase the quality of doing business in Kosovo.
Qerim Ademaj, Deputy Chairman of the Kosovo Judicial Council, said that from the beginning the Council agreed with the opinion that this court will have a positive role in addressing issues related to business. He promised that with the available budget funds they will try to make this court functional. He said that the Judicial Council has formed a working group which will compile the operational plan for the functioning of this court. He said that within a period of three months, it is expected that the judges will be appointed and the cases will be transferred to the commercial court for handling.

Chris Thompson, Chief of Party of the USAID Commercial Justice Program, pointed out that a colossal effort has been put into creating this law. He emphasized that the business community and the legal community need to be part of this process. He stressed that if implemented correctly, this law could change the game when it comes to Commercial Justice in Kosovo. He added that it is a step forward for the investment environment in Kosovo. He said that the Commercial Court was created to break away from the old system. This will be a new institution that specializes in commercial dispute resolution.

Head of Office of SDP Kosovo, as well as Chair of AmCham’s Legal Affairs Committee Kujtesa Nezaj Shehu said that the establishment of this court is a very important step in the development of commercial justice in Kosovo. She pointed out that the Commercial Court law is among the projects of the American Chamber of Commerce Legal Affairs Committee. The purpose of this project is to analyze this law and then discuss with businesses about the expectations they have associated with this law. She added that it is important to take into account the input and feedback of businesses from the start of the Commercial Court, as this court mostly deals with business matters.
AmChams in Europe stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine

25 February 2022 – AmChams in Europe, the umbrella organization for 46 AmChams in 44 countries across Europe and Eurasia stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. The ongoing invasion of Ukraine violates international law and endangers peace and security across the region. It poses a clear threat to fundamental values of human dignity, democracy, rule of law, and solidarity.

Our thoughts go out to all the individuals who are directly impacted across the region, including our fellow AmCham colleagues, their members, partners, and relatives.

Our network brings together individuals and organizations with deep ties across Europe and Eurasia, and around the world. It is built upon a strong belief in the importance of cooperation, dialogue, and cultural understanding. The military actions underway jeopardize those ideals. AmChams in Europe supports all ongoing efforts to avoid further escalation, protect civilians and safeguard security and prosperity across the region.

Finnish Embassy mission leaders visit AmCham

Prishtina, February 25, 2022 – AmCham hosted Her Excellency Pia Stjernvall, outgoing Ambassador of Finland to Kosovo in a farewell meeting. The purpose of the visit was to celebrate the excellent cooperation between the Embassy of Finland in Pristina and AmCham, as well as an introductory to the Charge d’Affaires a.i. Head of Mission Johan Schalin and discuss the strengthening of cooperation in the future.

Workshop on Arbitration in Construction

Prishtina, March 1, 2022 - The American Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with USAID Commercial Justice Activity, organized a workshop on Arbitration in Construction, where Korab Sejdiu-Lawyer was a lecturer, along with members of this industry. During this workshop, the key topics that were discussed were the knowledge of the basic elements of arbitration, the identification of problematic issues and the understanding of the specifics of arbitration in construction.

Korab Sejdiu - Lawyer, said that this very important topic has played a very big role in the international arena as well. He stressed the advantages of arbitration such as faster procedures, flexibility regarding procedures, easier execution, limited appeals, confidentiality, etc. Some of the disadvantages of arbitration which have been mentioned are the high costs in some cases, the arbitrators are not limited by law, the procedures of evaluation of evidence, as well as the execution can be complicated. It was said that arbitrators’ competencies are more limited compared to those of judges. He further stressed that the lack of duality in arbitration makes arbitration less attractive for resolving disputes.

During this workshop, members also discussed the variety of arbitration professions, arguing that professionals from different industries bring different perspectives and knowledge to the case. Moreover, they said that the purpose of arbitration is justice, but not necessarily lawfulness.
Forum on the Future of Payments with a focus on Fintech

Prishtina, March 2, 2022 - The American Chamber of Commerce organized a forum to discuss the Future of Payments: Focus on FinTech, with Sokol Havolli, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank, Gazmend Selmani, from PBC / ibas, and Astrit Leti, Director of Operations in TIVE as speakers. Sokol Havolli, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank said that the Central Bank is working on creating more efficient payment mechanisms, which would reduce the use of cash. Further, when discussing the problems that financial institutions face, he stressed that Kosovo does not have a payment processing center, and consequently each transaction has a higher cost than if such a center existed.

Gazmend Selmani, from PBC / ibas, mentioned two key components in the independent functioning of a financial institution, one component is the inclusion in the interbank payment system, while the other component is the creation of instruments that encourage operators to provide payment methods electronically. He said that with these two elements, the number of electronic payments would increase. He added that when citizens are not sure that they will be able to pay electronically, they make sure they have cash with them, and this consequently reduces the number of electronic payments in relation to the opportunities that are in the market.

Astrit Leti, Director of Operations at TIVE, when speaking on how to decrease the use of cash, he stressed that we must fight tax evasion. He said tax evasion encourages people to pay in cash. He stressed that if we fight tax evasion with the mechanisms we have, then consequently, the number of electronic payments would increase. He further mentioned two important issues in establishing new payment methods: combating tax evasion and establishing a good legal infrastructure.

Impact of personal data protection regulation on businesses

Prishtina, March 8, 2022 – In order to understand Kosovo’s legislation on data protection, as well as the impact of European and other data protection regulations on the business community, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, has organized a roundtable on the impact of personal data protection regulation on businesses.

Commissioner of the Information and Privacy Agency, Krenare Sogojeva Dermaku, said that this agency oversees two laws, that of access to public documents and the protection of personal data. Sogojeva Dermaku added that the law on personal data protection is a complete transposition of the provisions of the general regulation on data protection (GDPR). Further, she said that it is important that institutions and society, in general, be aware of the protection of personal data, adding that the agency she leads, in addition to the work they do, has found space and time to promote the implementation of this law. Sogojeva Dermaku offered cooperation with private sector institutions, expressing that they are ready to provide advice and assistance in drafting internal legal frameworks for the protection of personal data.

Blendi Zhitija, the Legal and Associate at PwC Kosovo and Albania, said that it is important that institutions that collect personal data are as transparent as possible with clients, and in line with Kosovo’s legislation and GDPR.

Members present at this forum also discussed the importance of Kosovo’s law on personal data protection and GDPR, regarding the position of personal data protection officers in the institutions that collect this data. At the same time, it was discussed what is meant by legal data processing and the right to forgetting.
The impact of the Commercial Court on bankruptcy procedures

*Pristina, March 9, 2022* – A special judicial mechanism, such as the recently established Commercial Court, focusing on commercial cases will improve the efficiency of the bankruptcy proceedings as well. In order to discuss the impact of this judicial body on bankruptcy procedures, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and the International Financial Corporation (IFC) have organized a forum on Commercial Court and bankruptcy procedures.

Fahret Velija, Kosovo Judicial Council, said that this Council has taken concrete steps towards the functioning of the Commercial Court and that this court will consist of four departments provided by law. Further, Velija added that recently there has been an increase in bankruptcy cases, but nevertheless, he stressed that in the integrated case management system, no case of reorganization has been identified. He stated that this may be due to businesses not being aware of this part of the law, where they are allowed to use the opportunity to reorganize before liquidation proceedings are reached.

Njomëza Zejnullahu from the USAID Commercial Justice Activity said that the Commercial Court, as a specialized court, will provide businesses with faster and more efficient access to justice. She further said that the establishment of this court will have a positive impact on the efficiency of bankruptcy proceedings, where the elimination of delays and various challenges will make these procedures easier.

Syzana Dautaj from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), said that there are very few cases of bankruptcy in Kosovo and that there is a lack of awareness of businesses about the benefits that a proper bankruptcy procedure can have.

Arbitration as an opportunity for businesses

*Pristina, March 14, 2022* - The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in cooperation with the USAID Commercial Justice Activity is organizing Arbitration Week. The first topic that was addressed this week was Arbitration as an opportunity for businesses.

Tea Blakaj, Foreign Legal Advisor to the Prime Minister of Kosovo, said that since the commercial disputes dealt with in court have been protracted and have not been professional, arbitration as an alternative dispute resolution is more convenient for businesses. Further, she added that the establishment of the commercial court will also serve to strengthen alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

Chris Thompson, USAID Commercial Justice Program Leader, believes that businesses need fast and decisive methods, so as such arbitration can be a very beneficial alternative for businesses. However, he added that arbitration is not used enough. He went on to say that businesses are working to recognize arbitration as an alternative opportunity to the judicial system and the advantages that this alternative has.

Kujtim Kërveshi, Partner, Kerveshi & Partners said that thankfully there was no resistance from public institutions in Kosovo in the establishment of arbitration and mediation as alternative methods. He said arbitration is the most effective mechanism for a dispute, as it serves both the well-being of the business and the preservation of relations between businesses.
Resolving disputes through arbitration: Process and implications

Prishtina, March 15, 2022 – Day two of the Arbitration Week featured the discussion on resolving disputes through arbitration, with focus on processes and implications with Njomëza Zejnnullahu, arbitrator from USAID Commercial Justice Program together with Visar Ramaj, partner, RPHS law have discussed the advantages of arbitration for businesses in Kosovo.

Commercial Justice Arbitrator Njomëza Zejnnullahu emphasized that Kosovo businesses need to choose a more professional way of resolving various issues around the law and the problems it faces. The most correct and professional way according to Njomëza Zejnnullah is the choice of arbitration, because arbitration involves arbitrators with different experiences on different issues, different from the courts. According to Ms. Zenjullahu confidentiality is present in arbitration for various businesses in Kosovo, which is a great help for the businesses. Zenjullahu stressed that the court and arbitration cooperate with each other and are by no means competing with each other, because they have the common goal of choosing a context as efficiently and effectively as possible.

RPHS Law Partner Visar Ramaj agreed with many points mentioned by Ms. Zenjullahu has also presented his points about arbitration. Mr. Ramaj emphasized that the main advantage of arbitration is its simplicity to businesses in terms of laws and in terms of time. Ramaj added that arbitration is in cooperation with the court, at the same time the court with the arbitration, because they have the same goal together. Ramaj added that the American Chamber of Commerce of Kosovo is one of the most professional centers in the region around arbitration.

To conclude the discussion Njomëza Zenjullahu and Visar Ramaj added that businesses’ awareness of arbitration should start to happen, along with help from all of us about arbitrage education.
Women’s involvement in arbitration, critical to a sound legal judgement

*Prishtina, March 16, 2022 –* Women in Arbitration is one of the topics that is discussed every year in the framework of Arbitration Week, organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in cooperation with the USAID Commercial Justice Activity, and also a topic that needs special attention, given the important role it has.

Shpresa Ibrahimi, Legal and Arbitration Expert said that the non-inclusion of women in the profession of arbitrators stems from the prejudices that a woman faces. She added that with the work and dedication of young girls, but also with the help of universities, highly professional girls and women have been created, who are prepared to address and solve any kind of problem, with special emphasis on arbitration.

Legal Country Manager at Boga&Associates Delvina Nallbani said that diversity in the legal system is important since it signals society that the justice system is accurate and equal. Further, Nallbani said that diversity within the legal system brings different perspectives, and as a result, enriches the legal reasoning that ultimately leads to a fairer judgment.

Erbлина Krasniqi Prishtina, Lawyer, and Founder of Prishtina Law said that the low representation of women in arbitration is a phenomenon that is present, not only in Kosovo but also internationally. Krasniqi Prishtina added that diversity in arbitration is a worldwide phenomenon due to the low involvement of women in arbitration and the reluctance of businesses to nominate female arbitrators in resolving disputes.

Kujtesa Nezaj Shehu, Lawyer, SDP Kosovo and Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, said that women are under-represented in arbitration, both in the arbitration list and in their appointment to resolve a certain case. Such situations do not mean that cannot be improved if the obstacles faced by women in the arbitration profession are addressed, she added.

Recognizing arbitration awards: Arbitration and Commercial Court

*Prishtina, March 17, 2022 –* During the arbitration week organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo and the USAID Commercial Justice Activity, the topic of recognizing arbitration awards have been addressed, in particular the discussion about arbitration and the Commercial Court.

Eros Gashi, the Senior Political Advisor to the Minister of Justice, said that the Ministry of Justice is committed to encouraging parties to use alternative methods in resolving disputes. In addition to arbitration, as an alternative method of resolving disputes, he also mentioned mediation. Gashi added that changes have been made to the bylaws for mediation, the fees of mediators have been increased, in order to raise the professional standard.

State Attorney Fitore Gajtani said that the state advocacy is familiar with both state and international arbitration. She added that companies that provide services to state bodies, mainly agree that in case of conflict to determine the local court to resolve these disputes. Gajtani mentioned that the state bar has only had one case of domestic arbitration so far.

Valon Basha, Partner at Basha Law, said that the procedure of recognizing and executing arbitration awards is provided by law. He added that this procedure is simple and begins when the proposer submits to the court the request for recognition and execution. Basha stressed that
with the establishment of the Commercial Court these issues will be handled more professionally and the processes will be faster.

Korab Sejdiu, Partner and Founder at Sejdiu&Qerkini, said that if commercial decisions are local, they do not need recognition, but only a request for execution to be made in the Commercial Court. He went on to say that for commercial arbitration, from a foreign country, the decision should first go to recognition proceedings then to enforcement proceedings in our court. He stressed that there are some limited legal grounds to challenge the arbitral award.

Deputy Chief of Party at USAID Commercial Justice Activity Vjosa Shkodra said that arbitration as a process is not influenced by state institutions, as it is a process that takes place outside the judicial system.

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**Education Committee meets the head of Accreditation Agency**

*Prishtina, March 17, 2022* - The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo held a meeting together with the Education Committee. Present at this meeting were: Shkëlzen Gërxtaliu from the Accreditation Agency, Vildane Kelmendi from Cacttus Education, Petrit Bushi from AAB University, Edmond Muhaxhreri from A.U.K and Suat Berisha from Universum.

In this meeting were discussed many necessary topics about accreditation for higher education. Also during the meeting various discussions were opened to facilitate the work and to be more correct in various details about accreditation.
International experts were part of the discussion during this meeting, because all of the members agreed that Kosovo has many perfect experts who can do their job by themselves and the work should not be done by international experts who are not properly aware of the law in Kosovo. Gërxhaliu stated that the program “Follow up Procedures” will be present mainly with the implementation of recommendations by experts. One of the key points to be developed by the Accreditation Agency is that they should start to be more cooperative with the Chambers in general for better results in future projects.

In this meeting were discussed some more detailed problems mentioned by the participants themselves such as: time of implementation, refusal of accreditation, inequality between state and private institutions and so on. All these were reviewed by Shkëlzen Gërxhaliu in as much detail as possible on his part with the hope that soon every detail will be functional.

Utilizing the benefits of arbitration

*Prishtina, March 18, 2022* - The Arbitration Week organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the USAID Commercial Justice Activity was concluded with the topic of utilizing the benefits of arbitration.

On the fifth day of the Arbitration Week, Doarsa Kica Xhelili, member of the Parliament, said that politicians should inform their electorate about alternative options for resolving the conflict in Kosovo. She added that although the Kosovo judiciary system is known for procrastinating cases, it is important for politicians to inform businesses and potential investors that Kosovo has very good capacity for alternative dispute resolution methods if they are afraid of procrastinating cases. She went on to say that the predictability of the duration and the possibility of choosing arbitrators, makes the parties feel more comfortable and believe that the trial is impartial.

Vjosa Shkodra, said that Kosovo has a very good legal framework for arbitration. She added that the Law on Arbitration is quite well consolidated and that Kosovo follows the UNCITRAL model. She said that in order to avoid lengthy proceedings, businesses can turn to arbitration where the procedure is predictable in terms of time and that arbitrators can be chosen by the parties.

Kosovo, an attractive country for business process outsourcing

*Prishtina, March 21, 2022* – The Business Process Outsourcing Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce held a meeting, where the 2022 objectives and plans of this committee were discussed.

Fatos Ameti from Sonnecto, and also chairperson of the BPO Committee, said that this committee should work on the affirmation of the BPO sector in Kosovo. He stressed that the assistance of state institutions is very important in creating a strong sector of Business Process Outsourcing.

Further, the members of this committee discussed the importance of promoting Kosovo in penetrating the foreign market. In addition, they discussed the possibilities of establishing a training center and a strategic plan for the government to promote Kosovo as an attractive place for outsourcing business processes.
The role of USAID in supporting women empowerment in their areas of expertise

*Prishtina, March 22, 2022* – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a roundtable with the USAID Kosovo Mission Director Zeinah Salahi and the Women Leaders’ Committee of AmCham to discuss the role of USAID in supporting women empowerment in their areas of expertise.

Zeinah Salahi, USAID Kosovo Mission Director, said that part of women's power is the expertise and the added value they bring to their professional area. Further, she added that the attention should be on the expertise women bring to the table as professionals, and not focus on gender. Additionally, Salahi said that the goal is to help everyone excel in their area of expertise, and as a result, the discussion changes and the narrative gets richer.

The Women Leaders present discussed the ways they can help the younger generation of women to succeed and excel. They stressed the importance of role models and guidance when choosing professions dominated by men.

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The financial sector committee discussed its priorities and objectives

*Prishtina, March 23, 2022* – Financial Sector Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo held its next meeting where the plans and objectives of this committee for the upcoming months were discussed.

During the meeting, members discussed the Law on Digital Signature, as one of the main priorities of this committee. They have also discussed the Law on Banks and their cooperation with the Banking Association. The Law on Payments and the Law on Microfinance was also discussed, as secondary issues that need to be pushed forward.
The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo celebrates 18 years of service to the business community

Prishtina, March 24, 2022 - On March 24, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo celebrated 18 years of dedication, hard work, and perseverance. Throughout these years, AmCham, along with its members, has been dedicated to improving the business environment in Kosovo and creating opportunities for young entrepreneurs and new ideas.

Jeffrey M. Hovenier, the U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, who was also present at AmCham’s celebration, said that over the last 18 years, AmCham has established its reputation as an irreplaceable pillar of the business community. He emphasized the critical importance of organizations, such as AmCham, in advocating for the needs of the private sector and that the government institutions take that advocacy into consideration. Further, he said that the private sector is the key driver of economic growth.

Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo Albin Kurti attended the AmCham’s anniversary, by stating that Kosovo’s strong business community from the diaspora, along with its unique geographical position, makes our country eligible of being a future center for the facilitation of production and processing of products, as well as the provision of services. “Our long-term vision is to make Kosovo the most prosperous country in the Western Balkans,” he said. Prime Minister Kurti added that the Government wants to fulfill this vision and advance the private sector, by cooperating with all the Chambers, as well as local and foreign companies of goodwill.

Afore Rudi, President of AmCham’s Board of Governors, said that the professional relationship of AmCham and its members is the key to strengthening the private sector development. Rudi
went on to say that it is a matter of great pride to be here 18 years later, remaining successful and always embracing the organization’s good values.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka said that AmCham is ranked among the top 10 most active and largest organizations among the 46 AmChams in Europe. “We strive to constantly bring new activities and introduce innovative approaches, but what remains unchanged is our dedication and passion to serve you,” he said to the members present.

**Partnership with the private sector, essential to the Government’s cyber security plans**

*Prishtina, March 30, 2022* – Digital Economy Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce held a meeting with Lulezon Jagxhiu from the Office of the Prime Minister. During the meeting, cyber security and the steps taken by the Government have been discussed.

Lulezon Jagxhiu, Office of the Prime Minister said that from the policy point of view, the Government is addressing two key issues, the Law on Cyber Security and the strategy for cyber security. Among the issues addressed by this law, he also mentioned the establishment of an agency, which will work as part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In addition, Jagxhiu said that in terms of strategy, they see progress and that the purpose of all this is to create a good action plan, which will serve as a guide for the Government over the coming years.
Further, Jagxhiu said that for the realization of these plans, cooperation with the private sector is more than necessary in many aspects, in particular in stimulating innovation and startups in the field of cyber security.

During the meeting, members also discussed cyber security training and other ways of cooperating with the Government in the future.

**A predictable business environment is needed**

*Prishtina, April 5, 2022 –* To discuss the interpretation of tax laws and legal disputes, the unification of the Law on Personal Income Tax with that of the Law on Corporate Income Tax and the submission of financial statements, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has organized a meeting with the Parliamentary Committee on Budget, Labor and Transfers and the Tax Committee of AmCham.

The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Budget, Labor and Transfers Armend Muja said that it is important to listen to the perspective and voice of businesses, as businesses are the ones most affected by these policies. He stressed that the purpose of the commission he chairs is to create a balance between protecting businesses and protecting consumers. Muja further added how the commission is working on creating a predictable environment for businesses so that success is equal for everyone.

Sami Salihu, Director of the Department for Registration and Taxpayer Service at TAK, also an external member of the Tax Committee of AmCham, said that, so far, two draft laws have been drafted on Corporate Income Tax and Personal Income Tax, but what has changed is only the Corporate Income Tax Law. He stressed that individual businesses are discriminated by this law.

In addition, the members of the Tax Committee present at this meeting expressed their concerns regarding the Law on Personal Income Tax, the Law on Corporate Income Tax, the Law on VAT, tax holidays, etc.

**Healthcare Committee held a meeting with the Director of the Health Insurance Fund**

*Prishtina, April 6, 2022 –* The Healthcare Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce held a meeting with Fatmir Plakiqi, Director of the Health Insurance Fund. During the meeting, they have discussed the independence of the Fund, the possibilities of cooperation between the private and public sectors, the lack of qualified staff, and other important issues.

Fatmir Plakiqi, Director of the Health Insurance Fund, said that the Fund has managed to create two very important systems, the Fund Information System and the Electronic Prescription, which are in their final stages. Plakiqi further said that they have reached a memorandum of understanding with various public institutions for the exchange of data, which is very important for the Fund.

Further, the members of the Healthcare Committee discussed their concerns regarding the law on the price of medicines and services, the lack of qualified staff, and other important issues.
AmCham's Legal Affairs Committee met with the Deputy Chair of KJC

Prishtina, April 8, 2022 – To discuss the objectives and projects of AmCham’s Legal Affairs Committee, and to address the impact of the Commercial Court, the committee met with state judicial institutions and representatives of the USAID Commercial Justice Activity.

Qerim Ademaj, Deputy Chair of the Kosovo Judicial Council, said that since the Council intends for the Commercial Court to become operational within the next six months, the first group of judges will be elected by internal competition. He added that this process will begin after the election of the President and Administrator of the Court. Ademaj further said that this court will have a total of 15 judges, 9 during the first instance and 6 during the second instance, including the President of the Court.

Deputy Chief of Party of the USAID Commercial Justice Activity Vjosa Shkodra, who was also present at the meeting, said that 18 commercial affairs experts have been trained at the Law Academy, and are willing to contribute to the training of new judges.

Further, the members of the Legal Affairs Committee discussed ways in which this committee can assist in the functioning of the Commercial Court, as soon as possible.

AmCham’s Manufacturing Committee meets representatives from ERO and the EBRD

Prishtina, April 12, 2022 – To discuss the challenges with energy supply and replacement substitution with alternative forms of energy production, the Manufacturing Committee held a meeting with representatives from ERO and the EBRD.

Lutfije Dervishi, Member of the Board, Energy Regulatory Office, said that the energy crisis in Kosovo has come as a result of various problems, such as the collapse of energy blocks, increased consumption, and blockage of energy transfer lines. Dervishi stressed that these problems have had a double effect, not only in increasing the price of electricity but also in increasing other prices, as a result of the energy price increase.

Leonora Kusari, the Regional Coordinator of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, said that one of the most important points in the strategy is a green investment. She said that the EBRD provides support in two components, such as technical assistance and energy auditing within companies. Kusari further added that work is being done toward energy conservation education and investment creation.

The Managing Director of the Energy Regulatory Office Petrit Pepaj stressed that in terms of consumption, Kosovo is considered a leader in the Balkans. He stated that industries use only 30% of this consumption, while the rest is consumed by households. Further, Pepaj said that work is being done on the new law on self-consumption, where the limit for self-consumption and connection capacities will be determined.

Strengthening energy capacity and energy efficiency is important for businesses

Prishtina, April 15, 2022 – The Government’s plans on strengthening energy capacities with a focus on green energy, as well as affordable energy tariffs for commercial consumers were the
main focus points in the discussion organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo with the Minister of Economy Artane Rizvanoli.

Minister Rizvanoli revealed to the present companies the plans of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo for green energy and the impact on the sustainable economy, as well as the work and challenges of the energy sector in the country, as well as the Energy Strategy 2022 – 2031 which is in completion.

The Minister of Economy stressed that the strategy, in addition to aiming at the decarbonization of the energy sector in the country by 2050, thus fulfilling Kosovo's high potential for the development of Renewable Resources, also reflects the Government's commitment in terms of socio-economic development. She added that the strategy aims to enable the energy sector to serve as a tool for the country's economic growth and increase business opportunities and youth employment.

The members of the Green Committee, Energy and Mining Committee, and Trade and Customs Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce, expressed their concerns about the security of energy supply, but also provided ideas and recommendations regarding the promotion of energy efficiency in the country, including investment financing.

Cyber hygiene: An important aspect in avoiding cyberattacks

Prishtina, April 19, 2022 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized the next edition of the "Training Tuesday” activities, with the topic of discussion on avoiding cyberattacks, with a focus on cyber hygiene. This training was delivered by the Head of Defence, Cyber and Security at Cacttus Xhatvit Gashi.

Throughout the training, Xhatvit Gashi explained the most common types of cyberattacks and ways to avoid them. He continued by informing the participants on what cyber hygiene is and the importance of good cyber hygiene, in both the private and public sectors. Gashi went on to explain the most appropriate and common practices for better cyber hygiene and the benefits coming with it.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo marks Earth Day

Prishtina, April 22, 2022 – In order to improve the environment and raise the general social awareness of corporations and individuals on environmental issues, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, has launched the initiative of planting trees along highways of Kosovo.

The first symbolic activity was launched on Earth Day with the planting of trees and flowers at one of the green oasis highways at the entrance of the city of Prishtina, while it was also supported by AmCham’s member company Kutia.

The Deputy Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Hysen Durmishi said that this activity aims at making green spaces along the highways. He said that “there are many activities, which the ministry is involved in, throughout the territory of Kosovo. This activity today is a joint activity with the American Chamber of Commerce for planting trees and flowers, in order to make spaces green and look more beautiful. We believe that by planting the highways, we will start small with our aim in raising awareness,” said Durmishi.
The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, said that by planting trees and flowers, we contribute to enriching the city and improving the environment. “The idea was to plant trees and flowers along the highways to enrich and contribute to the improvement of the environment,” said Zeka.

AmCham expresses its concern about the possibility of withdrawing pension savings

Prishtina, April 22, 2022 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo expresses its concerns about recent public discussions and legislative initiatives to enable the withdrawal of pension savings.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo strongly believes that such measures run counter to the purpose for which the pension savings fund exists and that the measure would have short-term socio-economic benefits.

Citizens’ pension savings should enable a dignified standard of living after their retirement, therefore reducing the value of pension savings will affect the standard of living in the post-retirement age.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo calls on the Government to consider reviewing tax policies for essential products in order to make the current situation of rising prices for the citizens of Kosovo affordable, especially those with a more limited level of income.

AmCham starts its activities on Girls in ICT week

Prishtina, April 25, 2022 – With purpose of raising awareness, promoting, and motivating the engagement and empowerment of girls in the ICT industry, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, under the patronage of the Municipality of Prishtina has started its activities to mark Girls in ICT week, on the occasion of International Girls’ Day in ICT, which is celebrated on April 28.

During this week, numerous events will be organized, where various speakers from the ICT sector will discuss the opportunities that this industry offers to girls.

Director of Sales, Marketing, and Operations at UCX, also Secretary-General of the Board of Governors of the AmCham Jeta Zagragja said that this is an industry that with its dynamics and chaos offers problem-solving opportunities and that it is important to start at an early age, in order of sowing the right seeds. “By being yourself and having discipline in the workplace, you can always achieve what you want. We women do not need help and we do not need opportunities to give us a hand in achieving our goal, because we are strong enough to manage ourselves, and we create our own opportunities by working hard,” said Zagragja.

Abetare Gojani, Executive Director of IPKO Foundation said that it is important for girls to be informed that this sector is not only made up of men but that there is a huge space for the inclusion of girls too. Gojani added that the detailed nature of girls is very necessary for any engineer.
Non-formal education expert Ylberina Mala said that continued education is very important in this industry and that involvement in it should start at a young age. "I am glad that young people today are offered opportunities to create skills, which are not only offered in school, but which can also be enriched by the non-formal education, and I am happy to belong to this field that affects the education of many new generations," said Mala.

Liridona Gërxhaliu from Sonnecto, as well as the moderator of this event, said that in this sector there is still a very small number of girls, adding that these statistics are extremely worrying. She added that girls add value to this industry and their participation in it is very important.

**Developing human capital; a responsibility of each segment of society**

*Prishtina, April 26, 2022* – Issues related to human capital, including workforce availability, have lately been reported as issues of concern by businesses. Banka për Biznes is establishing the Human Resources Academy in May, a project whose fundamental purpose includes workforce development.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has organized a workshop on Developing Human Capital, where the main benefits coming from the Academy of Human Resources were discussed.

Anita Kosumi, Head of the Human Resources Department at BPB said that the Bank for Business Academy is being crowned with five generations of BPB Junior. She said this program offers opportunities to listen and learn from the experiences of others, by adding that this program, through consultations and discussions, will guide students towards the career they want. As part of this training, she mentioned that soft skills and emotional intelligence will also be taught, through which these employees will be able to create healthy company culture wherever they go.
The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka said that one of the main concerns raised by businesses in recent years has been human capital and finding a qualified workforce. He stressed that, in addition to central institutions, business associations and businesses themselves play an important role in reducing the gap between labor supply and demand.

**Self-confidence and perseverance, factors that help overcome any challenge**

*Prishtina, April 26, 2022* – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo held its next activity within the Girls in ICT week organized under the patronage of the Municipality of Prishtina. The topic discussed in the presence of primary school students was amplifying the power of girls in technology.

Zana Curri, Software Development Team Leader at Radix said that with the increase in demand in the ICT sector in recent years, the participation of girls in this field has increased, as well. She stressed that women in the ICT sector face great prejudices, but these are challenges that can be overcome by working and believing in themselves.

Property and Facility Manager at Sutherland Shpresa Kika said that working in the ICT sector is a very attractive and interesting work. She said that to achieve success one must work hard to gain professional skills and that challenges are part of the process, which must be overcome with confidence and perseverance. Further, Kika stressed that the market in Kosovo is a market that offers many opportunities for the development of young people, especially in the technology industry.

Drenusha Ymeri, Human Resources Manager at Litera said that Kosovo is a country with a lot of talent and potential for the development of the technology sector. She added that there are many young people who want to study in the field of technology because this field, in addition to being interesting, also brings many benefits.

Chief Business Development Officer at LinkPlus Iliriana Ibraj said that it is important that girls in the ICT sector, although in small numbers, do not feel inferior and that they express their opinion in any environment. She went on to express the importance of continuing education and gaining knowledge that helps the profession.

**Opportunities for a career in ICT**

*Prishtina, April 27, 2022* – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo held its next activity in the framework of Girls in ICT week, organized under the patronage of the Municipality of Prishtina. To discuss possible careers and opportunities offered to youngsters, especially from various programs and projects for young girls, stakeholders from state institutions, but also the private sector were part of the panel of discussion.

The Deputy Mayor of Prishtina Donjeta Sahatçiu was also present at the event, as a keynote speaker, who said that the Municipality of Prishtina, this time, has managed to support this sector, by allowing girls and women to consider ICT as an opportunity to pursue their working career. “This time, we have come together to raise our voice by allowing more girls and boys to see ICT as a career for the future,” said Sahatçiu.
The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka said that for a long time the field of ICT has been perceived as a profession suitable only for men. "Decades ago, it was prejudiced that this profession is only for men, but this approach has changed given the fact that women now work in ICT as well," said Zeka.

Fjolla Restelica, Head of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) in the KODE Project, the Ministry of Economy said that in recent years the opportunities for girls in ICT have increased, and this is shown by the increasing participation of girls in this sector. She told the students present that in this profession, curiosity and willingness to continuously learn are very important.

Lecturer at Cactts Education Rrezarta Plana said that not only Kosovo, but every country in the world, is still facing shortcomings in the development and inclusion of girls in the field of ICT. She added that the ICT sector is a very challenging and dynamic field and that support is always needed.

Executive Coordinator at Kutia, Liridona Syla said that the profession in ICT is considered very successful for girls while adding that the company she comes from aims to make the staff 50 percent with girls.

Naxhije Pajaziti Arifaj, Director of Communications at KEDS said that it is very important for girls to see themselves in any profession, and to know that they have the opportunity to develop in any field they choose.

AmCham wraps up Girls in ICT week activities

Prishtina, April 28, 2022 – On April 28 which marks International Girls’ Day in ICT, AmCham hosted an event to discuss the involvement of women and girls in the ICT sector was the topic on which the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo concluded its activities as part of the Girls in ICT week.

The panel of the fifth event comprised of women managers in several ICT companies, including Greta Kamberi (Gjirafa), Qendresa Mehmeti (AAB College), Verona Selmani (pbc), Leonida Ismaili (Eneldat) and Saranda Sefedini (Incodeks).

AmCham signs a Memorandum of Understanding with FECE

Prishtina, April 29, 2022 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering of the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina.”

The main purpose of this memorandum is to provide professional advice to businesses in the field of electrical and computer engineering and enabling the continuation of professional internships for the students of this university with the member companies of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.
Dear President Macron,

We want to congratulate you on your re-election! Your victory comes at an important moment for France, Europe and the world. While in the coming months and years you will be rightly preoccupied with concerns and well-being of people of France, eyes of the world are once again set upon France to lead the world in these difficult times.

Kosovo’s visa liberalization dialogue has entered its 10th year. As such, this process has been lasting longer than the visa liberalization process of ALL Western Balkans countries put together, and then multiplied by two. Putting it differently, Croatia’s entire accession process from candidate status to full membership took less than Kosovo’s visa liberalization process.

From the onset Kosovo’s visa liberalization process was set for hardship. Initially, Kosovo’s plea for the launch of visa liberalization dialogue was adamantly declined. We, the citizens of Kosovo, gazed with despair as our fellows from the region rejoiced at their right to move freely across the EU. And when the moment finally came in 2012 to launch the visa liberalization process, Kosovo was handed a roadmap with twice as many criterias then other Western Balkans countries. Despite it, in the course of the next six years Kosovo met all visa liberalization criterias. This was formally confirmed in July 2018, and then again multiple times by the European Commission and the European Parliament. Continuous calls to the Council of the EU to end Kosovo’s isolation have been fruitless.

The tale of fading EU visa liberalization promise has been juxtaposed with Kosovo’s democratic blossoming. Last year, Kosovo re-confirmed its democratic maturity with exemplary elections and smooth transition of power. Since then, Kosovo has been making steadfast progress across all fronts. Kosovo’s effort in the fight against corruption and organized crime have been noted by Transparency International. In its latest report, Kosovo made the biggest historical annual improvement. By the same token, Kosovo made biggest the historical annual improvement, and the highest ranking ever, in the quality of its democracy, according to the latest report by the Freedom House. In this light, it came as no surprise when a few days ago Reporters Without Borders recorded the highest Kosovo ranking in the last ten years. In a nutshell, our country is today freer and more democratic than ever before. This is also partly the reason why last year Kosovo recorded second lowest number of asylum seekers in the EU compared to other countries of the region, according to Eurostat.

Kosovo is a small country, but despite its geographic minuscule Kosovo rallied and supported Allied global peace efforts. Last year Kosovo accommodated more than 1,300 Afghan evacuees showing not only solidarity with the refugees, but also our genuine and long-term commitment to NATO. Kosovo has fully aligned its EU foreign policy on sanctions against Russia and showed its readiness to accommodate 5,000 Ukrainian refugees, while already started accommodating Ukrainian journalists. Kosovo’s civil society continues to promote EU values on daily basis and uses the EU perspective as the only pathway for building a democratic society. The same holds true for Kosovo citizens, as EU still enjoys almost absolute support from our population, with almost 94% rate of approval. This is a clear sign of commitment to the EU integration, standards and values from all segments of Kosovar society.

As Kosovo institutions continue to face significant social, economic, and political challenges, we as civil society continue to hold our government accountable. We expect from our state institutions to multiply their efforts on our path towards the EU accession, for the benefit of all Kosovar citizens. Yet, in order to empower us to use the EU perspective as a credible framework that would galvanize reforms ahead, we need a credible Union that respects its own promises.
Free movement of people is a basic human right and promotes socio-economic development. The sufferings from this ghetto disproportionately target ordinary citizens, youth and students, civil society activists, business community, as well as those in need for medical treatment in the EU countries. Continuation of isolation will only incentivize ordinary citizens to find alternative routes to travel for legitimate reasons, and those routes are often illegal, costly and dangerous.

While the European Commission has been asked to prepare formal opinions for the readiness of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to start the EU membership process, the Council of the EU is expected to discuss their application in the June meeting. We wholeheartedly welcome these efforts! At the same time, we call upon the EU to recognize the importance of the Western Balkans as key part of the European security architecture, in view of Russia’s efforts to backroll continuous consolidation of democratic progress and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region. Granting visa liberalization for Kosovo and opening of the accession talks for Albania and North Macedonia should be a starting point of this discussion.

In this light, we call upon the French Presidency of the EU Council to solidify Union footprint in the Western Balkans. “France cannot be France without greatness”, said Charles de Gaulle. And the time for greatness has never been more righteous. Therefore, we call upon France to usher the European enlargement into a new era, by ending the isolation of Kosovo citizens and opening accession talks for Albania and North Macedonia. We look forward to the June Western Balkans Paris Conference and hope that it can be a dawning moment for the EU perspective of the region.

Sincerely,

1. Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF)
2. European Policy Institute of Kosovo (EPIK)
3. Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS)
4. Prishtina Institute for Political Studies (PIPS)
5. Organization for Democracy, Anti-corruption and Dignity Stand-up! (ÇOHU!)
6. Forum for Civic Initiatives (FCI)
7. Kosova Democratic Institute/Transparency International Kosova (KDI/TI)
8. Community Building Mitrovica (CBM)
9. Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC)
10. Open Data Kosovo (ODK)
11. Artpolis – Art and Community Center (Artpolis)
12. Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED)
13. YMCA Kosovo
14. Different Civic Emancipation (EC Ma Ndryshe)
15. Kosovo Gender Studies Center (KGSC)
16. Speak-up Movement (Lëvizja FOL!)
17. Eye of the Vision (SIV)
18. Balkan Sunflowers Kosovo (BSK)
19. Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo (HLC-K)
20. American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo (AmCham)
21. Cultural Heritage without Borders Kosovo (CHwB Kosova)
22. Internews Kosova
23. Lumbardh Foundation
24. Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS)
25. BONEVET Network
26. Civil Rights Program Kosovo (CRP/K)
27. Kosovo Education Center (KEC)
28. RIINVEST Institute
29. Innovation Center Kosovo (ICK)
30. Kosovo Women's Network (KWN)
32. GAP Institute for Advanced Studies
33. Democracy for Development (D4D)
34. The Kosova Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (KRCT)
35. Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC)
36. Initiative for Agricultural Development of Kosovo (IADK)
37. Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS)
38. Youth Initiative for Human Rights Kosovo (YIHR-KS)
39. Kosovo Women for Women (K-W4W)
40. Institute for Development Policies (INDEP)
41. NGO Aktiv
42. Kosovo Law Institute (KLI)
43. New Social Initiative (NSI)
44. Labyrinth
45. NGO ETEA
46. Youth Association for Human Rights (YAHR)
47. Association of Independent Intellectuals in Deçan (SHIP)
48. NGO Integra
49. NGO Zana Klinë
50. Autostrada Biennale
51. Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights (MWAHR)
52. Kosovo Association for Information and Communication Technology (STIKK)
53. Kosovo Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship
54. Center for Equality and Liberty (CEL)
55. Let's Do It Peja
56. Center for Social Group Development (CSGD)
57. NGO Vision 02
58. Kosovo Architecture Foundation (KAF)
59. S bunker
60. Foundation 17
61. Kosovo Center for Distance Education (KCDE)
62. The Society of Certified Accountants and Auditors of Kosovo (SCAAK)
63. Patients' Rights Association in Kosovo (PRAK)
64. Democracy Begins Here Network (DFK)
65. Green Foundation (Jeshil)
66. IPKO Foundation
67. Center for Political Courage (CPC)
68. Women's Association Aureola
69. The Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection in Kosovo (KOMF)
70. Network of Peace Movement (NOPM)
71. The Balkan Forum
72. Kosovo's Association of the Blind (SHVK)
73. GERMIN
74. ROMA VERSITAS
75. Action for Mothers and Children (AMC)
76. Women's Association "Hand to Hand"
77. Professional Health Association (PHA)
78. Institute for Development of Civil Society "Innovate"
79. ANIBAR
80. Organization for Increasing Quality of Education (ORCA)
81. NGO Polis
Transatlantic cooperation will alleviate current economic challenges

Washington, May 13, 2022 – The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka was hosted by the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Ruth Sherman, along with several other directors of the American Chambers of Europe, while in Washington. The U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Sherman said that the U.S. State Department provides technical assistance, to all states, in establishing investment filtering mechanisms.

The delegation had a meeting on Capitol Hill with Senator Thom Tillis, who recently visited Kosovo. Senator Tillis spoke about the need to overcome political challenges in the Western Balkans, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while emphasizing his belief that all countries, including Kosovo, should become part of the regional common market initiative.

Current economic challenges were discussed in the meetings with senior U.S. officials, such as supply chain challenges following the post-COVID19 pandemic and, most recently, the war in Ukraine, widespread inflation, compromised food and energy security, and stock market instability, and China’s uncompetitive practices that also affect market distortions. It was a common conclusion that the Russian aggression, which has been strongly condemned by the network of American Chambers of Europe, has contributed to the increase of transatlantic unity, and that this, together with the strengthened economic cooperation, will alleviate the current economic challenges.

The delegation also met with Diane Farrell, Deputy Under Secretary for International Trade, Ambassador Jayme White, United States Deputy Trade Representative (USTR), and the leadership of APCO Worldwide, including Jess O'Connell and Susan Molinari.

AmCham signs the declaration of support for women's economic empowerment

Washington, May 23, 2022 – To recognize the contribution of women around the world and to create an environment where women thrive as leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators, to support the United Nations 2030 Agenda on achieving gender equality and empower all Women and Girls, and the Joint Declaration of the World Trade Organization on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment of 2017, as well as acknowledging the fact that gender equality and diversity are fundamental prerequisites for achieving sustainable economic development, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has signed the Declaration of Support for Women’s Economic Empowerment, together with the International Trade Administration in the United States Department of Commerce (ITA) and the American Chambers of Europe.

The signing of this memorandum was done in the framework of the joint initiative of the chambers with the International Trade Administration, "Empower Her", launched in March by the United States Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo.

The goals of this initiative include advancing women’s economic empowerment and gender equality in international trade, encouraging American and European companies to diversify their jobs, supporting women-owned enterprises, improving tools and services for women, and raising the awareness of women entrepreneurs about services related to trade, investment, and export.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo invites the Government of Kosovo, the private sector and members of the international community to support efforts in advancing gender equality and diversity.
Israeli Ambassador Ziv visits AmCham

Prishtina, May 30, 2022 – The Ambassador of Israel to Kosovo, Tamar Ziv, visited the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo. In her meeting with the Executive Director Arian Zeka, she emphasized the necessity of cooperation between Israeli and Kosovo businesses.

AmCham Executive Director of AmCham Arian Zeka, spoke about the advantages of Kosovo in terms of attracting foreign direct investments. He said that the cooperation with Israel is of special importance for Kosovo.

Both, Ambassador Ziv and Executive Director Zeka agreed to pursue cooperation with purpose of organizing trade and investment opportunities for Israeli and Kosovo businesses.

The GROW project provides support to businesses for their investments in renewable energy

Prishtina, June 1, 2022 – In order to present information about the GROW project, technical assistance, and how businesses can benefit from the guarantee window, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo has organized an event on Funding Opportunities: Presentation on GROW.
Blerta Begu from GROW Kosovo said that the project aims to accelerate and help Kosovo’s potential in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy investments. Although the potential exists, there are currently not many investments.

Emphasizing that the focus of the project is investments in solar panels and photovoltaic solar panels, Begu presented some of the benefits for businesses, which include: reducing the monthly cost of energy bills, good return on investment, supporting the local economy, increasing the value of the property, advancing the business, the inclusion of VAT in the price of installation of PV systems and increasing the customer base.

The technical expert, Pëllumb Gjinolli, spoke about the technical aspect, saying that when planning solar energy, the factors that need to be taken into consideration are: solar radiation, solar panel angle, type of the solar panel, panel efficiency, and inverter efficiency.

Gjinolli also pointed out that the groups that GROW aims to help are: independent energy groups, off-grid installations, behind-the-meter installations, solar power generators, and investments in energy efficiency.

Whereas, according to Arian Lila from GROW Kosovo, some of the financial benefits are avoiding the impact on business cash flows, flexibility for the credit limit, and the period of return on investment. He also added that, given that sooner or later there will be an open market for electricity and also that in 2026 the EU is expected to introduce a carbon tax, such investments would be highly favorable for businesses.

Cooperation between AmCham and Federation of Israeli Chamber of Commerce

Prishtina, June 3, 2022 - The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo welcomed the Member of the Presidium of the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce, Roy Roznek, in a meeting
that marked the first step towards a long and successful cooperation between the two institutions and the private sectors of Israel and Kosovo.

Roznek said that he was impressed with the opportunities that Kosovo offers to foreign investors, as well as the many potentials of cooperation between businesses in Kosovo and Israel. He said that these potentials should be used for dynamic cooperation.

Inflation, a present and future challenge

Prishtina, June 7, 2022 - Controlling inflation was the first topic that was elaborated out of a series of events organized by the American Chamber, which focus on the future challenges for the economy of Kosovo. The panelists who participated in the first discussion of this series of events were Visar Ymeri (Musine Kokolari), Hajdar Korbi (World Bank) and Ramis Ahmetaj (Financial Expert).

Visar Ymeri, Executive Director of the Institute for Social Policy "Musine Kokolari" said that the increase in inflation in Kosovo comes as a result of the introduction of money in the market in an uncontrolled manner and within a very short time. He added that inflation started last year, with the introduction of money in the market, as a step to resume the economic cycle that was interrupted due to the pandemic. He went on to say that government policies should focus on stabilizing basic consumer prices and reducing the negative effects of rising prices on vulnerable sections of society.

Hajdar Korbi from the World Bank gave a detailed presentation on the sources of global inflation where he made a comparison between different periods of inflation in Kosovo and the Eurozone. He said it is difficult to control prices, therefore, the focus of the government should be to support the groups that are most affected by rising prices.

Financial Expert Ramis Ahmetaj said that the rise in inflation to high levels has come as a result of the pandemic, as well as the war in Ukraine. According to him, the source of inflation in Kosovo is the increase in the cost of raw materials. He said that we are in a situation where inflation is high and the supply for consumer goods will decline, if measures are not taken sooner.

Arian Zeka, Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, said that the issue of rising inflation should be approached proactively and that this is the purpose of this series of discussions in the American Chamber, generating discussion and generating recommendations for the government.

Security of energy supply as an important factor of public safety and economic development

Prishtina, June 8, 2022 – The next topic that was discussed in the series of events organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in order to address the challenges that await the economy of Kosovo, was Security of Energy Supply. In this discussion, the challenges of energy supply in the coming months, as well as alternative ways how Kosovo can be supplied with energy were mentioned.
Learta Hollaj, Chief Advisor on Sustainable Development Partnerships to the President of the Republic of Kosovo, said that it is important to understand the connection between the energy sector and economic development and that discussions on this topic should be open and comprehensive. She further stressed that the main focus of government and any policy maker should be the diversification of the energy portfolio.

The Professor of the University of Prishtina, Arben Xhukaj said that energy security is the main factor in an energy system. He also said that the issue of supply in Kosovo is both a political and technical issue and that a sustainable energy supply is also important for public safety.

The Chairman of AmCham’s Manufacturers Committee, Gojart Kelmendi from Euro Kosova member firm, said that energy security is a great challenge for producers in Kosovo, therefore addressing these issues is extremely important for the private sector.

Energy diversification also implies workforce diversification

Prishtina, June 10, 2022 – To discuss the role of the private sector in the energy transition, specifically in the diversification of energy sources, as well as in the diversification of the workforce, the American Chamber of Commerce organized a discussion within the Kosovo Sustainable Development Week, with speakers from the two committees of the American Chamber of Commerce, the Committee on Energy and Mining, as well as the Committee of Women in Energy and Mining.

Sabri Tërnava, Director of Consumer Affairs at KEDS, said that it is important for companies like KEDS and KESCO to develop projects in a way that encourages women and girls to be involved in the technical aspects of the project. He added that KEDS Academy has served as a very good way for the inclusion of young girls in this sector.

Gentiana Alija, Director, Alfa Solar and co-founder of the Women in Energy and Mining Committee said that although the participation of women in the energy industry continues to grow, the number of women involved in the technical part of the projects is still small. She added that training are very important for capacity building in this field, especially for the inclusion of women in this sector.

Edona Demaj, Director, EKO SOC and co-founder of the Women in Energy and Mining committee said that the presence of women in the company is important as they bring a new perspective and a different set of skills that can be extremely useful for the company.

Guri Shkodra, Project Manager at SOWI Kosovo said that one of the biggest challenges of the future will be energy supply and such a transition will require the commitment of everyone, including women. Therefore, it is important that girls are encouraged to choose a profession in the energy sector as early as possible.

Zana Bajrami Rama, Manager at KOSTT and co-founder of the Women in Energy and Mining Committee, said that since the energy transition requires new human capacity and new expertise in the field of human resources, this period can serve as a period to address issues of gender equality. She added that it is important that all groups in society benefit equally from this transition.

Arian Zeka, Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, said that mentality is the main issue contributing to the gender gap, and it requires great efforts to
address and years of patience to change. He added that this mentality can be combated by amplifying the experiences and achievements of women in the energy sector, in order to serve as a source of inspiration for young girls.

Circular Economy Roadmap Workshop with the Private Sector

Prishtina, June 10, 2022 – To explain the Roadmap to Circular Economy for the private sector, The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo was pleased to co-host a Workshop in collaboration with UNDP, where stakeholders from the private sector had the opportunity to voice their concerns regarding the transition to a circular economy, as well as learn of new ways this transition can be achieved. This workshop was facilitated by Ladeja Godina Kosir (Founder and Executive Director at Circular Change) and Marco Segovia Bifarini (Project Manager at Circular Change).

Maria Suokko, UNDP Resident Representative in Kosovo, in her opening statement said that it is important for the private sector to alter the way in which its products are made. Suokko believes that transitioning to a circular economy is crucial to revert the harm caused by greenhouse gas emissions in a sustainable way.

Florije Tahiri, Senior Officer for Waste Treatment, MESPI, stressed that Kosovo is facing major environmental challenges. As long as the waste is not yet managed in an integrated way, then the level of pollution will be high, given that the rivers and lakes are also quite polluted. She said that the Ministry of Environment is constantly working to address these challenges, draft strategies and implement concrete projects in this field.

Arian Zeka, Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, said that the circular economy is a response of paramount importance to the local and global environmental
challenges. He further stated that a circular economy should help address these and other issues related to depletion of natural resources, degradation of environments and generation of more waste.

AmCham calls on Kosovo to consider participation in the Open Balkans initiative

Prishtina, June 15, 2022 - Recognizing the importance of the Western Balkans economic coordination and integration, stability and prosperity through free flow of goods, people, capital and services, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo calls on the Government of Republic of Kosovo to seriously consider participation in the ongoing common regional market initiative.

AmCham reiterates the calls of the U.S. administration representatives that any regional cooperation initiatives should enable equal representation of all the Western Balkans countries, and that it is the responsibility of three Open Balkans initiating countries to address concerns of Kosovo’s Government, and those of other skeptical countries. No regional common market initiative can succeed in circumstances in which all the countries of the region are not treated equally and respectfully, and serious efforts are not made to remove irritants to cooperation.

AmCham strongly believes that economic cooperation has no alternative at these uncertain times for regional and global economies, and it is through economic integration that the countries can overcome the upcoming difficulties, such as supply chain challenges, food security, energy shortages and talent shortages.

Finally, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo believes that it is of utter importance for all the Western Balkans countries to fully align with the U.S. and EU policies, and maintain a harmonized position by condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine through sanctions.

AmCham urges the Assembly to not vote on the withdrawal of pension savings

Prishtinë, June 22, 2022 – At the time when the review of the proposed amendments to the Law on Pension Funds by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo is expected to begin, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo called on MPs to not approve this legal initiative.

Enabling the withdrawal of pension savings should not be a response to the current socio-economic challenges of the country, also due to the many uncertainties that characterize the global economic environment and the further deepening of difficulties in the following months. AmCham emphasizes that despite their authority, deputies of the Assembly of the Republic have a responsibility to make policies that guarantee and continuously improve the well-being of their citizens, and therefore do not support initiatives that erode the prospect of a dignified life after retirement.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo reiterates its call for a comprehensive dialogue, primarily between political stakeholders and others, for a monetary and fiscal measures program that would address current challenges and facilitate the livelihood of citizens.
Digitalization of Taxpayer Services enables a faster and safer process

Prishtina, June 30, 2022 – Digitization of services for taxpayers is an important step towards a faster and safer tax system. To discuss the Tax Administration of Kosovo’s achievements to date in digitalizing, automating, and improving taxpayer services, as well as the next steps in TAK’s digitalization agenda, the American Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the USAID Kosovo Economic Governance Activity organized an event to discuss "Digitalization of the Tax Administration of Kosovo: Discussion with Director-General of TAK”.

Ilir Murtezaj, Director-General of TAK, said that the digitalization of the Tax Administration has started in 2011 with the launching Electronic Declaration platform – EDI, when TAK addressed the need to improve services to businesses, to make the tax declaration and payment process easier and faster. He added that the online system for filing and paying taxes has not only improved filing experience for businesses but also increased security and reduced the possibility of making mistakes considerably.

Melita Ymeraga, from Melita & Partners, said that when new systems are developed, the focus should always be on businesses and decision-making should be based on information in order to make it possible for businesses to meet their tax obligations. Further, she stressed that it is important to continuously educate taxpayers and businesses about the most efficient ways of complying with tax obligations.

Yll Zagragja, from Zagragja & Associates, spoke about the improvement of compliance with tax obligations to TAK since the establishment of the electronic system of declaration and payments, emphasizing among other things that thanks to this system, businesses save a lot of time, not having to physically meet with TAK officials.

Nora Kokaj, Public Financial Management Objective Lead at the USAID Kosovo Economic Governance Activity, said that the digitalization of taxpayer services has not been developed in a short time, but has been a continuous multi-year process that has created a consolidated system of service provision. Digitalization of taxpayer services provides for a more enabling business environment, as well as better management of public finances.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, said that the biggest benefits of the electronic declaration and payment system are increased efficiency, reduced operating costs and transaction points, which consequently reduces the possibility of illegal activities.

Digital Signature, the future of business identification

Prishtina, July 28, 2022 – To discuss the benefits of a digital signature, the procedure of obtaining a digital signature and the overall importance of having a digital signature in the future, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized the next forum “Benefits of Digital Signature”.

Ajshe Jashari, Head of the Information and Communication Technology Division in the Ministry of Economy, said that the Ministry of Economy is in the process of issuing by-laws for electronic identification. Additionally, she said that these by-laws clarify the technical characteristics of security, the regulation of the conformity of the service provider, as well as the ways of equipping this means of identification.
Blerim Rexha, Professor at the University of Prishtina and PBC Academy/CTO at www.rks-trust.com, said that since Kosovo has a legal basis for electronic identification, the Government should organize an awareness campaign for the use of digital signatures, to promote the use of digital signatures and seals. Further, he recommended that in order for the Ministry of Economy to implement the digital identification easier, it should contract private companies to carry out the technical part of this process.

Arianit Fazliu, Chief Executive Officer & Co-founder of Kutia X, emphasized that with the use of electronic signatures and seals, businesses would save a lot of time, costs and ease the bureaucracy, by performing various obligations electronically.

The members present at the forum gave their recommendations and concerns, where they discussed trainings that should be held for ARBK officials on the use of digital signatures, the risks of using electronic identification, and possible barriers that interfere with the implementation of electronic identification.

Training Tuesday: Investing in the Stock Market

Prishtinë, August 2, 2022 – The next edition of AmCham’s Training Tuesday discussed the topic ‘Investing in the Stock Market’, delivered by Mr. Muharrem Inan, who acts as the Head of Treasury, Financial Institutions, and Private Banking Group at BKT.

Mr. Inan explained the current global inflation crisis which is driven by both demand and push-side inflation. With regards to stock markets, he further explained that due to the disruptions from the Ukrainian war, there would be lower performance in EU stock markets, but a better performance in other global stock markets.

He said that BKT has developed the so-called Smart Invest platform, which allows BKT clients to invest in stock markets. He explained that there are alternative financial stocks such as Apple, Microsoft, Pfizer, Tesla, Netflix and so forth. Clients use BKT e-banking to have access to the Smart Invest platform and choose their positions.

In addition, BKT mobile app offers financial-related news translated into Albanian, for clients who wish to follow the recent financial events happening worldwide. The market offers exchanges during a 24h time span and offers leverage positions as well. He stressed that, considering that BKT does not have any legal obligation to declare market gains of costumers, excluding withholding tax, declaration, and obligations towards TAK remain an individual responsibility.

Breakfast for Executives with Rozeta Hajdari

Prishtina, August 18, 2022 – After a long break from one of AmCham’s most exclusive events, the executives of AmCham member companies and the Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, Rozeta Hajdari, gathered in a breakfast to discuss the inflation, energy, and labor issues. The aim of the meeting was to generate recommendations on how the Government and the private sector can contribute to overcome these challenges.
Minister Rozeta Hajdari spoke about the most recent challenges of inflation and the energy crisis that Kosovo is facing. Inflation is primarily being ‘imported’, considering the scale of Kosovo’s imports; whilst, the energy crisis is mainly due to the conflict in Ukraine.

Further she acknowledged that these challenges are global, but do not spare Kosovo. Therefore, it is significant to tackle the impact these problems have, especially on the private sector. She assured that the government, respectively the ministry she directs, has prioritized these challenges and is working relentlessly toward creating eased conditions for the business environment in these difficult times.

Members present expressed their concern on how these crises will impact their activity as well as offered their expertise and resources to help overcome the difficult upcoming months as swiftly as possible.

Private sector has a key role to play in the accelerated growth of the regional economies and the regional economic integration of the Western Balkans, as U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary Gabriel Escobar highlighted in a meeting with leadership and members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Escobar emphasized the important role the private sector plays, adding, “I appreciate the advocacy work regional American Chambers and the business associations do to benefit the entire region.”

“The story of the Western Balkans is one of phenomenal growth and phenomenal economic opportunities present here,” said Deputy Assistant Secretary Escobar.
While he acknowledged that some growth is related to post-COVID economic activities and remittances, there is strong economic growth in almost every country in the Western Balkans. “The message that I want to give to American companies is that if you have a consolidated, open market in the region, you have the capacity for turbo-charged growth in LNG, in shipping, transportation, IT, renewable energy, and smaller sectors such as tourism and entertainment. These investments will serve not only the Western Balkans, but Eastern Europe in general,” Escobar said, adding that the Balkans have the potential to become a service provider for all of Europe. He said that pro-business governments that are open to cooperating across borders are key to unlocking this economic potential.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Escobar and the representatives of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo also discussed the potential of the Open Balkan Initiative to provide for economic growth, job creation, and FDI in the region, contributing to stability and prosperity.

**Roundtable discussion on Interinstitutional Coordination in Arbitration**

*Prishtina, 12 September 2022 –* The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo in cooperation with the USAID Commercial Justice Activity organized a roundtable with judges, lawyers, and arbitrators, with the purpose of exchanging information regarding alternative dispute resolutions with a focus on arbitration.

Chris Thompson, Chief of Party for USAID Commercial Justice Activity, claimed that despite the wonderful opportunity of avoiding clogging in Court cases, arbitration is not being used enough. Further, he noted that USAID supports many things, where among others, provides support in building arbitration and using arbitration in Kosovo considering its great opportunity. Further, he stressed that it is important for lawyers to recognize that they should be putting the arbitration clause in their contract.

Mahir Tutuli, President of the Commercial Court, said that since the establishment of the Commercial Court, there had been only a couple of arbitration cases. He stated that the main challenges encountered in arbitration are the enforcement procedures, which sometimes take longer than going to court. Lastly, he claimed that it is essential that all institutional mechanisms focus on finding a solution with regard to this matter and ease the procedures of the Courts which already are overwhelmed with cases.

Verona Dibra, Judge at the Commercial Court, claimed that there are only two cases of arbitration. The procedure for dispute settlement takes time and goes through different stages, but usually what hinders its processing is the part of execution, which needs a proper approach.

Njomëza Zejnullahu, Arbitrator and Senior Legal Officer, USAID Commercial Justice Activity stated that the goal of this roundtable was to fuel inter-institutional cooperation. In particular, to discuss with each other what the obstacles of arbitration are, and how to tackle them. It is profoundly crucial to ask ourselves what could have been done, to have a higher number of cases in arbitration.
AmCham and KCC sign a Memorandum of Cooperation to promote arbitration

_Prishtina, September 14, 2022 -_ A Memorandum of Cooperation between the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo Arian Zeka and the President of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce Lulzim Rafuna was signed, witnessed by the Chief of Party of USAID Kosovo Commercial Justice Activity Christopher Thompson.

The two institutions agree to cooperate in promoting arbitration in Kosovo and advancement of commercial arbitration services.

Environmental, Social Governance, added value for businesses

_Prishtina, September 16, 2022 -_ Environmental, Social Governance (ESG) is an opportunity to build a more sustainable business and a key differentiator to increase relevance and trust with the organization’s stakeholders. To discuss all the ways businesses can benefit from ESG policies, AmCham organized the next event with the topic ‘The Importance and Benefits of Environmental, Social Governance’.

Olta Cibuku, Head of ESG, Amp Energy, said that although the implementation of these policies comes at a high cost, these are important criteria that attract investors to invest in the company. Further, she said that it is important for companies to diversify the labor market, so that everyone has equal opportunities to develop and be promoted.

Besmir Kokollari, Official for Education and Environmental Awareness in the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, said that the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure is in the process of drafting the decarbonization strategy. He added that Kosovo is committed to the green agenda led by the EU, known as the Declaration on the Green Agenda in the Western Balkans.

Mirsad Haskaj Chief Risk Officer at NLB Bank emphasized that even though a transition that complies with ESG policies can be costly, it is important for businesses to understand that the implementation of these policies represents added value for their companies.

Guri Shkodra, Project Manager at SOWI Kosovo, said that corporations have a social responsibility towards the communities that are affected by their activity and emphasized that the social responsibility of corporations not only takes care of the community they affect, but also brings benefits to businesses.

Love, Mercy, Facts: Managing People

_Prishtina, 19 September 2022 –_ To discuss issues such as Engaging the Workforce, Attracting Talent, Managing Relationships, as well as useful Training and Development Strategies, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo is organizing the Human Capital Week. AmCham kickstarted the week with the workshop titled “Love, Mercy, Facts: Managing People”, where a discussion on how to reach a balanced approach of people management took place.

Arianit Fazliu, Co-Founder and CEO of Kutia, explained that his method of management is based on three core principles: 1. Love, 2. Mercy, and 3. Facts, emphasizing that a reversed order would not make his management method work.
Without disregarding the importance of facts and numbers, Mr. Fazliu revealed how crucial it is to show employees love and mercy, as a way of understanding them in times when they are not showing their best at work. One ought not to proceed with facts and directly look at quantitative results without first considering empathy. A lot of information asymmetry is created by not following those three steps in Human Capital Management, a field in which he has around 10 years of experience.

Executive Director of AmCham, Arian Zeka, stated that although the situation regarding human capital has significantly changed after the pandemic, the workforce concerns in Kosovo remain similar to the pre-pandemic times. Further, he emphasized the concerning number of people leaving Kosovo to seek better opportunities elsewhere signaling that something is wrong and needs immediate attention.

Continuing Education, important in the technology and information sector

Prishtina, September 20, 2022 – The American Chamber marked the second day of Human Capital Week with an interesting panel, where the Human Capital dimension of ICT in Transition Economies was discussed.

Visar Jasiqi, Head of Product and Engineering at Radix, said that short and quick on-the-job training is useful to produce qualified staff. However, the traditional form of higher education, although long and time-consuming, is important for the proper preparation of the workforce. Also, he emphasized that the level of quality of higher education should be raised.

Hana Qerimi, CEO and co-founder at Starlabs, said that it is important for the education system to be in line with industry requirements so that students come out more qualified and better prepared for the labor market. Further, she emphasized that companies should focus on creating better management and leadership practices for their workers.
Ermal Sadiku, Managing Partner at Linkplus, said that in order to produce qualified labor for this industry with such high demand, reform must be made in primary education. He emphasized that as much as Kosovo's youth has potential, the short time that young people spend in schools directly affects the quality of the workforce.

Blin Zeqiri, CEO of ArtHouse, stated that since trends change quickly, it is very important to continuously educate and train the workforce in the technology and information industry. Also, he said that the main concern of businesses in the ICT sector is the departure of staff from the company for other companies.

**Solving Workforce Shortage in Manufacturing**

*Prishtina, September 21, 2022* - The American Chamber of Commerce marked the third day of the Human Capital Week, where a discussion on the Workforce Shortage in Manufacturing took place. The panel included Gojart Kelmendi – the executive director of Euro Kosova sh.p.k., and Shpetim Kalludra, an expert in the Employment Agency of Kosovo.

Kelmendi emphasized the concern over the shortage of workforce, which is affecting all sectors in the country, particularly the manufacturing sector. This phenomenon has become more evident in the last few years, as the flow of the workforce abroad has increased at unprecedented levels. Identifying the reasons why this shortage is occurring is important, to tackle them properly.

Kalludra stated that inadequate qualifications and lack of specified programs for the job market requirements are contributing to labor shortages. The government has identified the concern and has consequently worked on schemes with the aim of increasing the employment rate and easing the burden on employers. Two salient schemes have been recently put forward by the government, through the Employment Agency of Kosovo.

The first scheme - the so-called 1.8 measure - provides help to businesses by distributing 170 euros for new employees for 6 consecutive months, with a possibility of extension for another 6 months. The second scheme includes support for households with no member employed, by securing a job position and support of 300 euros monthly for a member of each jobless household.

It is worth underlining that around 70 thousand citizens are constantly in the labor due to the Employment Agency’s support. Besides the challenge of meeting the demand for employees, the manufacturing sector faces a production challenge, considering its high dependence on imports.

**Talent in the company, important for raising the overall performance of the organization**

*Prishtina, September 22, 2022* – Talent is without question an important component within a company. To further discuss how to identify talent and its development in the company, AmCham organized the discussion panel “Identifying and Developing Talent”, the fourth activity within the Human Capital Week.

Erald Pashaj, CEO of EPPC Albania & Kosovo, said that the importance of talents within an organization lies in the positive impact they have on the performance of other members of the
organization. He added that since one of the characteristics of talents is their willingness and desire to learn, developing these talents is done by challenging them continuously.

Maleta Mjeku, Human Capital Specialist at PBC, said that it is important to create a testing program that identifies talents so that these talents can then be developed through training and finally employed in positions that ensure their continuous development.

Shkumbin Ibraimi, Managing Partner and CEO of Mercurius Consulting, said that in today’s time, what is most required by the labor market are skills and the potential to develop further. In addition, he emphasized that it is important for human resources officials to develop evaluation methods that highlight the skills of workers.

Dhurata Robaj, Manager of the Human Resources, Training and Development Sector at BPB, also the moderator of the panel, emphasized the importance of investing in academies within the company, which provide workers with those specific skills needed for the company.

The partnership between the private sector and the government, key to the development of the country's education system

Prishtina, September 23, 2022 – During the Human Capital Week, many important topics that affect the development, preservation and use of Human Capital, as a key aspect in the country's economic development were discussed. The week ended with the topic The Importance of Education in Reducing the Skills Gap.

Valbona Fetiu Mjeku, Head of the Division for Vocational Education and Training, and Adult Education in the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, elaborated on the challenges that her division faces, as well as their efforts to overcome these challenges. Next, she emphasized the importance of a shared vision between the private and public sectors in improving the quality of human capital.

Jusuf Thaqi, Director of LIFE from Gjirafa, emphasizes the importance of reforms in the education system, which would enable the increase of the number of students in the fields most demanded by the market, so that we do not end up with a skills gap. He added that the greater the lack of coordination between institutions and businesses, the greater will be the cost of the latter.

Uran Rraci, Executive Vice President of Universum College, said that when it comes to the departure of the workforce from Kosovo, policies must be created to prevent this phenomenon, which damages the country's economy in dimensions such as the lack of qualified personnel, and also in unnecessary expenditure on the training of these individuals.

Gjeni Shporta, Representative of Kosovo in the American Councils for International Education, and moderator of the discussion emphasized that in order for a proper education system to function, the partnership between the private sector and the government is important.
Mediation week concluded

Prishtina, September 23, 2022 - To conclude the Mediation Week, AmCham in cooperation with USAID Commercial Justice Activity and Kosovo Chamber of Commerce organized a forum in which mediation in Kosovo was discussed.

Speakers at the forum presented different perspectives, highlighting the benefits of mediation, as well as ways how mediation services can be further promoted among the business community.

The panel comprised of Eros Gashi, Advisor to the Minister of Justice, Ganimete Xhelili, the President of the Chamber of Mediators, Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, and Lulzim Rafuna, the President of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce. The panel was moderated by Hasie Abdullahu Hajdini from USAID Commercial Justice Activity, whereas opening remarks were conducted by Christopher Thompson, Chief of Party of USAID Commercial Justice Activity.

AmChams in the region agree to strengthen the collaboration

Tirana, September 24, 2022 – AmCham Albania, AmCham Bosnia and Herzegovina, AmCham Kosovo, AmCham North Macedonia, and AmCham Serbia met during the Smart Cities Conference in Tirana and agreed to further strengthen the economic cooperation and promote development opportunities.

The AmChams agreed to continue working together to advocate for a better business and investment climate and encourage the removal of trade barriers and fostering the free movement of capital, people, goods and services.

Furthermore, AmChams commit to work together to explore untapped opportunities by strengthening the ties of AmChams in the region.

Faced with numerous challenges including energy security, lack of human capital, supply chain disruptions, trade barriers, cyber security, and climate issues, AmChams call on regional leaders to accelerate the reforms and cooperation, in aligning the economies with the EU rules, digital and green agenda, as well as the advancement of the US relations.

Reformation of the public procurement will result in improved patient care in Kosovo

Prishtina, October 6, 2022 – To discuss the improvement of patient care and the routes to a more efficient medicine supply, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a roundtable on “Building Partnership to Improve Patient Care in Kosovo”, in which in addition to representatives of health professionals, MPs, Fatmire Kolçaku, also the Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Committee for Health and Social Welfare, and MP Bekim Haxhiu, as well as Deputy Ministers of Health, Dafina Gexha Bunjaku and Arsim Berisha, also participated.

Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, Arian Zeka, emphasized the importance of building a partnership between public healthcare institutions and the private
sector with an ultimate goal of improving the patient care in Kosovo, as well as better management of public funds through more efficient procurement of pharmaceutical products. Naim Bardiqi, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, began the discussion by highlighting that patients’ care is the main objective of the ministry. Despite the financial challenges, laws on healthcare and health insurance are being drafted, with the intention of achieving a decent and long-term healthcare performance.

Sinisha Varga and Tihomir Strizrep, both renowned international experts in the field of healthcare, shared their expertise but also explained the reforms that Croatia undertook along the way which resulted in an admirable health system. The key to their success is mainly attributed to the so-called MEA (Managed Entry Agreement), which was also the emphasis of the roundtable.

Former Minister of Health of the Republic of Croatia, Sinisha Varga explained how a partnership through MEA works and what specifically should be considered when drafting agendas in healthcare. On the other hand, Tihomir Strizrep, besides explaining the process Croatia had to undergo towards reformation of its healthcare system, offered his recommendations and a five-point model that Kosovo ought to follow. What was a joint basis of their expertise and recommendations, is the utmost importance of having MEA in improving patient care and offering efficient services.

Lawyer Visar Ramaj introduced the perspective of laws and regulations concerning healthcare ecosystems. There are new draft laws being proposed, and the whole system is undergoing transformation. What is important to recognize is that the MEA is in accordance with Kosovo’s legal framework. In fact, such an agreement is not new, given that it took place with regards to Pfizer vaccines, hence there is nothing controversial about it. Undoubtedly, there needs to be will, courage, and integrity to push such beneficial settlements forward.

**Breakfast for Executives – Mayor mayor of Prishtina discusses with the members of the AmCham regarding the development of the city**

*Prishtina, October 12, 2022* – The Mayor of Prishtina Përparim Rama met with members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo to discuss development projects for the city of Prishtina, including the development of economic zones, which, among other things, would facilitate doing business within Prishtina.

Mayor Rama spoke about the Municipality’s plans for improving mobility within the city, but also the possibilities of realizing specific projects through public-private partnership. Rama spoke about the importance of the City Architect, an initiative of the municipal authorities, stressing that in addition to real urban planning, the City Architect will also help reduce bureaucracy, provide greater transparency and, consequently, eliminate corruption. The concept of smart cities and the use of information technology solutions to advance city management was also the focus of the discussion between Mayor Rama and representatives of the private sector.
AmCham organized the traditional Job Fair

*Prishtina, October 13, 2022*- The American Chamber of Commerce organized its traditional job fair also known as a recruiting event in which employers and recruiters met with potential employees and where job seekers found more about job openings at potential employers. It is the first fair organized following the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to accommodate the growing demand for workers among businesses.

Job fairs are excellent networking opportunities since they're filled with potential contacts who already work in your chosen field. They are a great place to do some info research since the companies at careers fairs provide huge amounts of information and experience about different sectors.

In order to find talents or potential workers, over 20 companies from different sectors that are members of AmCham have presented their new job positions at the recruitment fair. Many students were among the participants, expressing their interest and desire to be informed more about the vacant positions offered by the participating companies.

Some of the largest and most prestigious companies in Kosovo that were present included Kolegji AAB, Abkons Company, Art House, Banka Ekonomike, BKT Kosova, ELKOS GROUP, EY, FINCA Kosovo, Unlimited Gaming - Hyperactive, Interex, KFC Kosova, Kutia, Meridian Express, SPAR Kosova, PwC Albania and Kosovo, Radix, Raiffeisen Bank, Tafingo and TEB ShA.

Kosovo's PM extends his partnership to the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo

*October 17, 2022*- Private sector strengthening, promotion of Kosovo’s potentials for investments and exports, but also the advancement of the public-private dialogue were some of the key highlights from the meeting of Kosovo’s Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, with the leadership of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

In a meeting with the Board of Governors of the AmCham, Prime Minister Kurti emphasized the important role of the private sector in job creation and overall economic development. He praised the private sector for its sustainability over the years despite the great regional and global competition, but also the lack of state support in the past. He said that the future efforts should focus on strengthening of Kosovo’s economic diplomacy, and institutional capacities for promotion of foreign investments. The Prime Minister clearly expressed his good will for genuine dialogue with the private sector in Kosovo, to enable, among other things, an environment for sustainable and rapid growth.

President of the Board of Governors of the AmCham Afrore Rudi from Deloitte offered AmCham’s sincere partnership in providing recommendations for the challenges faced by the private sector. She explained that the AmCham’s organizes its advocacy efforts through the sixteen committees that function within the American Chamber, where the expertise of the various industries represented in the American Chamber is interwoven.

The Executive Director of the American Chamber, Arian Zeka, presented the organization’s new advocacy priorities, including the request for a centralized mechanism for public-private dialogue that would operate within the Prime Minister’s office, through which economic chambers would be able to address concerns of private sector enterprises. The American Chamber also proposes the structuring of the Agency for the Promotion of Investments and
Enterprises of Kosovo or any other new body for the promotion of investments within the Office of the Prime Minister, which would also serve as a single gateway for communication with investors. In the end, Zeka said that the American Chamber will offer its support for strengthening the capacities of economic diplomacy of Kosovo.

In the meeting attended by Luan Dalipi, Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister, as well as Lulëzon Jagxhiu, Advisor for Information Technology, the members of the Board of Governors of the American Chamber presented other recommendations for specific aspects of doing business in Kosovo.

Minister Rizvanolli discusses with the private sector regarding the security of energy supply

Prishtina, November 4, 2022 – To discuss the security of energy supply, energy tariffs, the increase in energy efficiency, but also the potential for renewable energy, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a discussion forum on the topic “What winter awaits us in terms of energy supply?”, in which, in addition to representatives of private enterprises, institutional stakeholders responsible for energy issues also participated.

Minister of Economy Artane Rizvanolli said that consumers in Kosovo should contribute to avoiding the worst scenarios of energy shortages. She said that the main objectives of the country’s institutions include the reduction of general consumption, through stimulation of energy saving and increase of energy efficiency. Minister Rizvanolli further said that the war in Ukraine has influenced the entire European continent, including the member states of the European Union, to face an uncertain situation in terms of electricity supply. The minister also announced the announcement of auctions in the following months, for granting licenses to companies interested in generating electricity from solar and wind sources.

The Chairman of the Board of the Energy Regulatory Office (ERO) Ymer Fejzullahu recalled the establishment of new energy tariffs in February of this year, and the non-increase of tariffs for businesses, evaluating it as a fair decision, despite great opposition. He emphasized that ERO continues to insist on the realization of all planned capital investments in both transmission and supply infrastructure. He also announced the easing of criteria regarding the licensing of generating capacities for self-consumption purposes. Fejzullahu also spoke about the need to complete the liberalization of the energy market, emphasizing the benefits that consumers would have from the transition to a free market.

Mimoze Veliu, Circular Economy Analyst at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), emphasized the importance of focusing on circular economy activities, including the systematic treatment of waste, thus influencing the ecological aspect, but also in the creation of new energy capacities.

Ilir Ibrahimi, representative of the private sector, expressed his concern about the energy supply for the upcoming winter. He added that the energy supply is at risk and that institutions must urgently address the great demand, focusing also on the diversification of energy sources.
The American Chamber of Commerce started Global Entrepreneurship Week with a discussion on startup support programs

*Prishtina, November 14, 2022* - On the first day of the activities arranged within the Global Entrepreneurship Week, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a discussion regarding startup support programs with a panel composed of representatives of international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector, which prompted an interactive discussion with young people interested in more information about existing programs.

Officially opening the activities of the American Chamber of Commerce in celebration of Global Entrepreneurship Week, the Executive Director of this organization, Arian Zeka, said that due to the importance that the American Chamber commits to the promotion of entrepreneurship, it has been part of these activities that have marked this week for a full decade in Kosovo. These activities have the Innovation Center of Kosovo (ICK) as their national host. He said the five-day activities of the American Chamber will focus on this year’s themes defined by the Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN), which are ecosystems, education, inclusion and policy.

Dajana Berisha, Executive Director of the Forum for Civic Initiatives (FIQ) spoke about the importance of supporting young people who have business ideas, regardless of whether those initiatives succeed or fail along the way, emphasizing social enterprises in particular. According to her, if the Government supports the entrepreneurship sector, the chances for development are higher, but the bureaucratic procedures that follow these schemes can cause delays in the disbursement of monetary support. At the very end, the leader of FIQ said that the organization she leads has focused on supporting startups that have ideas for digital and green activities, or that are environment-friendly.

Leonora Kusari, from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), spoke about the programs they offer for young entrepreneurs, with an emphasis on the Star Venture program, which, in addition to technical assistance for business development, also offers expertise for expanding into international markets. She said that the assistance offered to entrepreneurs is also related to access to investment funds. Thanks to the coverage of the financial risk that will be done by the EBRD, for the first time a commercial bank, BPB, will start granting loans to startups. Meanwhile earlier, TEB bank, thanks to the support from EBRD, had special lines of financing for enterprises owned by women. In the end, Kusari said that for the realization of a business idea, in addition to the initial interest, it is important for young people to do a detailed market analysis or research.

The owner of the Frutex company, Shaqir Palushi, spoke about the steps that young people should take to create a successful business. He affirmed the important aspects for entrepreneurship, such as time, orientation to market needs, but also ego. He encouraged young aspiring entrepreneurs to consider the advice of others, stressing that after going through these steps they should go to the right addresses for securing funding, including the contest for business ideas "Golden Idea", which was financially supported by the Golden Eagle Foundation and implemented by ATV television. He clarified that the purpose of this initiative was to support young people who have business ideas but have difficulties in accessing finance for the realization of those ideas.
Hakif Gashi with his story of 0$ - 1$ million on the second day of Entrepreneurship Week

Prishtina, November 15, 2022 - On the second day of Global Entrepreneurship Week, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo hosted an event with the founder and president of Meridian Corporation, Hakif Gashi.

Hakif Hashi talked about his journey towards building what is today one of the largest enterprises in the country. He said passion, dream and hard work are the variables of a success formula.

In this very motivating discussion, the students of the "Shtjefëm Gjeqovi" vocational high school in Pristina, the students from the Finnish School and the students of the AAB College participated.

The future of work and gender diversity

Prishtina, November 16, 2022 - The third day of the Global Entrepreneurship Week at the American Chamber brought the discussion on the Future of employment and gender diversity, with the stories of women who have left their mark in this sector and with suggestions for the further promotion of women’s employment and girls in Kosovo.

Women in Tech Kosovo and the American Chamber hosted this special panel on the future of work and gender diversity with Teuta Sahatqija from Women in Tech Kosovo, Jeta Zagragja from AnchorzUp, Hana Qerimi from Digital School, Abetare Gojani from Ipko Foundation,
Shkendije Himaj, Financial Sector Specialist and Arian Zeka from the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, in front of students from the Finnish School and students of RIT Kosovo.

This discussion marked the third day of the Global Entrepreneurship Week 2022 and aimed, among other things, at promoting equal opportunities and empowering girls and women in Kosovo.

The fourth day of the Global Entrepreneurship Week brings the discussion about the role of education

Prishtina, November 17, 2022 - On the 4th day of the Global Entrepreneurship Week 2022, we will talk about the role of formal and informal education, from the earliest to university, for encouraging entrepreneurship. Come and interact with Vildane Kelendi from Cacttus Education, Xhavit Rexhaj - Official Page from AAB College, Merita Ajdini from the American School of Kosovo, Edlira Dibrani from the Finnish School and Gentrit Berisha from the University of Pristina.

The role of formal and non-formal education, at all levels and in all disciplines, is extremely important for creating an environment that encourages entrepreneurship. Fruitful ideas and recommendations from the discussion of the fourth day of the Global Entrepreneurship Week, by Xhavit Rexhaj from AAB College, Vildane Kelendi from Cacttus Education, Merita Ajdini from the American School of Kosovo, Edlira Dibrani from the Finnish School and Gentrit Berisha from the University of Pristina.

AmCham concludes GEW 2022 with a discussion on the importance of networking for success

Prishtina, November 18, 2022 - The power of networking is essential for building a successful base and the creation of personal values. Networking is essential as it will help you develop and improve your skill set, stay on top of the latest trends in your industry, meet mentors, partners and potential clients and gain access to the necessary resources you will promote your career development. This was the main conclusion of a panel discussion on the importance of networking for success, organized by the American Chamber on the last day of the Global Week Entrepreneurship.

CEO of Kutia company Arianit Fazliu, said that networking is important first for the individual, family, and then society and finally business. He also emphasized that even more challenging than the creation of networking and people contacts, is maintaining networking. At a time when every job demands commitment and dynamism, it is very difficult to maintain the established contacts. He mentioned that networking is not always positive, especially in times when the influence of the so-called "bad role models" is very large.

Uranik Begu, Executive Director of the Innovation Center of Kosovo (ICK) spoke about the importance of networking in social networks with special emphasis on the LinkedIn social network. He stated that in this application as a result of networking can also find employment opportunities. He paid special attention to the idea of the transformation of the mindset to a
level where the person gives more than he receives. He also expressed that the main step to success is networking, not forgetting the importance of education and skills.

On the other hand, Valon Canhasi, CEO of the company Hallakate, showed the journey from the perspective of a CEO and how networking has helped him and his company succeed in finding workers, partners. He mentioned that through networking, the opportunity is given to the company within the company to be as familiar as possible. Also, he emphasized that participation in various events and activities is the main strategy to create as big a circle as possible, but also social media more and more influence the development of networking.

**Breakfast for Executives with Minister Hekuran Murati**

*Prishtina, November 25, 2022* — To discuss the fiscal policies undertaken this year, plans for the upcoming year, and a short overview of the projected budget for 2023, the executives of the American Chamber of Commerce met with the Minister of Finance, Hekuran Murati a breakfast for executives.

There have been numerous challenges that needed an immediate response, Minister Murati stated, while explaining his efforts to design proper and favorable fiscal policies, that would not only offer real-time support but also simultaneously lead to job creation and economic development. One of the key drivers of the economy is undoubtedly finance and liquidity, therefore, in order to preserve them, the Ministry of Finance – in the absence of monetary mechanisms – has developed quasi-monetary policies that have increased the money supply in the economy.

Various measures have been taken throughout the year. To help businesses sustain their performance, despite the general increase in electricity prices regionally, Kosovo has maintained the price without changes and has offered subsidies with the purpose of preventing the imported price from being transmitted to the business community and citizens, averting another inflationary wave.

In addition, Minister Murati claimed that measures such as direct support for businesses through subsidies for investment loans, employment support, and direct transfers for the most vulnerable part of society, have increased liquidity, which has in turn has incentivized economic activity and led to sustainable job markets. It is of the utmost importance to maintain the purchasing power of the economy, in order to prevent a recession from taking place.

Next year’s budget, with the support of the European Union, and a continuation of domestic revenues, is projected at €3.2 billion. The upcoming year will bring additional social schemes and measures, an increase in capital investments, regulation of the financial sector, and subsidies for youth and education, all with the intention of contributing to sustainability in such strenuous times. There are too many scenarios that cannot be forecasted, yet the cooperation of private enterprises and institutional stakeholders would help in overcoming economic struggles that emerge along the way.
Luxembourg Ambassador visits Kosovo

Prishtina, November 30, 2022 - Ambassador Patrick Heck and the Head of Mission Eric Dietz, of the Embassy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in Kosovo visited AmCham to meet with the Executive Director Arian Zeka.

In the meeting they discussed investment opportunities in Kosovo and trade cooperation between Luxembourg and Kosovo companies.

Breakfast for Executives with the Governor of the Central Bank

Prishtina, December 6, 2022 – To discuss current financial developments, plans for the upcoming year, access to finance, and the financial sector in overall, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized a breakfast for executives with the Governor of the Central Bank of Kosovo (CBK), Fehmi Mehmeti.

The financial sector in Kosovo is considered stable based on all the indicators of financial soundness, stated Governor Mehmeti. This recognition comes from international assessments, including those of the IMF, World Bank, EU Commission, and the U.S State Department. CBK not only fulfills the criteria and requirements for a solid institution, but it constantly endeavors to help in the economic growth of the country.

This year’s growth marked 3.7%, higher than 2021’s growth of 3%. Yet, this level remains in line with IMF forecasts of 3-4% annual growth needed for the financial sector to remain stable. Growth is mainly attributed to remittances, foreign direct investments, and public expenditures.
Undoubtedly, inflation has led to a decrease in consumption and has battered an otherwise higher economic growth.

The cooperation between the CBK and financial institutions continues to remain tight, as such, overcoming major challenges which for the past years, have trembled the world. The fact that the challenges faced today by the banking sector of Kosovo are similar to the challenges that characterize the banks of developed countries argues for the success of this sector so far, which has reached a satisfactory stage of maturity. Banks are highly liquid, have relatively low-interest rates, offer all the required services, and are constantly digitalizing to serve the demands properly. On the other hand, insurance companies have marked increased capital, improved performance, and have been accordingly consolidated.

Forthcoming plans include the amendment of the Draft Law on Banks, which has been forwarded to the assembly. In addition, it is of immense importance for the Draft Law on Pension Funds to be processed. CBK follows EU and Basel directives and works closely in cooperation with the IMF, usually by referring to the models of countries that have gone through similar economic transitions as Kosovo in order to result in inclusive laws and regulations. The aim of the CBK is to increase competitiveness, as the main driver of growth. The high level of trust towards both financial institutions and non-financial institutions, and cooperation between institutions and private stakeholders, are tremendously important in such growth.
AmCham organizes the Charity Gala Dinner

Prishtina, December 9, 2022 – The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo organized the Charity Gala Dinner, a traditional event in which 417 people participated this year. The Ambassador of the United States of America, Jeffrey Hovenier, delivered the keynote speech, thanking, among others, the companies for their generous donations in support of the causes selected this year by the AmCham. Among the special guests were the Deputy Chief of Mission of the American Embassy in Prishtina, Alyson Grunder, the Head of the Economic and Political Section of the Embassy Rallan Hill, the Head of the USAID Economic Growth Office Joshua Mike, as well as the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Trade in Albania Neritan Mullaj.

During the dinner, a mini concert was organized by a string ensemble, while the main artistic performance this time was also provided by the String String group. This year’s Gala Dinner was the first after a two-year interruption due to the COVID19 pandemic and was held at Klan Arena. Three organizations will benefit from the net proceeds from this year’s fundraising event, with 50% of the funds going to the American-Kosovar Education Fund (KAEF), 30% of the funds going to the children of located in the SOS Village and 20% of the funds will be allocated to the suicide prevention hotline “Linja e Jetës”, which is facing difficulties in continuing its operations.

The AmCham prepared special acknowledgments for the platinum sponsors: Banka Ekonomike, Elkos Group, Devolli Corporation, Meridian Corporation and Scardian, as well as the gold sponsors Banka Kombëtara Tregtare, FINCA, Bodrum i Vjetër and Limak – Prishtina International Airport. Silver sponsors: Coca Cola HBC, Frutex/Golden Eagle, Gjirafa, NLB Banka, ProCredit Bank and Sharrcem, and regular sponsors, American School of Kosova, AnchorzUP, ArtHouse, ASHA, Deloitte, Interex, KEP Trust, KFC, Orbico, Paketos, PBC, Railtrans, Swiss Diamond and Tafingo were also thanked.
Ambassador Hovenier Delivers Keynote Remarks at AmCham’s Charity Gala Dinner

Prishtina, December 9, 2022 – Delivering a keynote speech at AmCham’s Charity Gala Dinner, the Ambassador of the United States of America to Kosovo, Jeffrey Hovenier, thanked the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo for raising funds for worthy causes. He said that events like these demonstrate the importance of corporate social responsibility.

Ambassador Hovenier further said that Kosovo’s private sector members play a vital role in addressing three different challenges: energy diversification, economic empowerment for all, and rule of law.

Speaking about energy diversification, Ambassador Hovenier said that Kosovo’s older power plants have a significant impact on energy supply predictability, the health of the citizens, and attracting potential investors.

Ambassador Hovenier highlighted the importance of an inclusive economic empowerment, highlighting the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. Ambassador Hovenier said that when women have the opportunity to compete on a level playing field, they perform very well. The Ambassador said society benefits from greater diversity in government, social institutions, and business communities.

Ambassador Hovenier asked AmCham to play a leadership role in Kosovo's society to help ensure that glass ceilings are broken, that impediments to people on the basis of gender are removed, and that all of us are champions of ensuring a level-playing field.

Ambassador Hovenier welcomed Kosovo’s efforts to combat corruption, adding that the U.S. government is involved in supporting these efforts, including the active role of USAID in helping to establish the commercial court.

Finally, Ambassador Hovenier thanked the businesses for helping advance the shared vision for a sovereign, independent, successful, and prosperous Kosovo, which is a shared mission of the U.S. Embassy and the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

DAS Escobar meets AmCham Board of Governors

Prishtina, December 13, 2022 – The U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Gabriel Escobar, met with the members of the Board of Governors of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo.

DAS Escobar reiterated the commitment of the United States to support the Euro-Atlantic integration of all countries of the Western Balkans, as well as the economic integration of the regional markets.

Representatives of the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo shared with DAS Escobar, who is also U.S. Special Representative for Western Balkans, AmCham’s position in support of the economic normalization between Kosovo and Serbia, as well as common regional market initiatives, such as Open Balkans and Berlin Process.

AmCham leadership voiced its concerns over the tensions in the region as an impediment to Kosovo’s ability to attract investment.
End-of-year reception

Pristina, December 21, 2022 – AmCham hosted a year-end reception for its members yesterday to mark the successful conclusion of 2022 and to exchange best wishes for the new year.

The President of the Board of Governors, Afrore Rudi (Deloitte), thanked the members for their engagement in AmCham committees, encouraging them to propose activities that are of interest to them. She thanked the Executive Director and the staff for their contribution to the success of the organization.

Executive Director, Arian Zeka, thanked all members for their loyalty and continued support. He said that the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo continues to be one of the AmChams with the fastest growth in Europe, and today it has turned into an organization that is a symbol of representation of foreign investors and the private sector in general in the country.