

European Investors Council Monthly Newsletter



EU2022.CZ

Czech Presidency of the Council
of the European Union

The July edition of the Newsletter of the European Investors Council (EIC) focuses on news about EIC activities; including insights from the event “Plans of Czech Presidency of the EU Council for the Western Balkans.” This edition of the Newsletter includes an exclusive interview with Mr. Mergim Cahani, the CEO of Gjirafa, one of the fastest-growing tech companies in Central Europe. The Newsletter furthermore goes on to focus on recent relevant legal updates, news from EIC members, and other important news related to the business environment and investment climate in Kosovo.



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Following the Czech Republic's six month EU Council Presidency election, the European Investors Council organized the event Plans of the Czech Presidency for the Western Balkans.

Through this event, we had the pleasure to hear from His Excellency Mr.Pavel Bilek, Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Pristina, the plans of Czech Presidency and the vision of EIC in this context. After mentioning the overall priorities of the Czech presidency, Mr.Bilek noted that this presidency will pay special attention to the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, as well as that the visa liberalization for Kosovo is high on the agenda of the Czech presidency.

Whereas, Mr.Tomáš SZUNYOG, European Union Special Representative in Kosovo, stated that the Czech presidency priorities are in full alignment with general EU priorities. He noted that he believes that the Czech presidency can offer support to Kosovo stakeholders in their approximation to the European Union.

Mr.Besnik Bislimi, First Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Development and Dialogue of the Republic of Kosovo, talked about Kosovo's development and improvement in rule of law, fight against corruption, organized crime and migration. Mr.Bislimi reiterated the need for visa liberalization for Kosovo citizens.

The CEO of EIC, Mr.Emrush Ujkani, congratulated the Czech Republic on assuming presidency of the EU Council, noting that its program is promising especially in the sense of cooperation with Kosovar businesses.



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EIC participates in public hearing regarding Draft Law on Cryptocurrency

EIC was part of the public hearing held by The Commission for Economy, Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade regarding the legislative initiative Draft Law on Cryptocurrency.

In the presence of representatives of the Ministry of Finance, the Financial Intelligence Unit, Customs, ARKEP, ASHI, representatives of the European Investors Council, Kosovar Business Alliance, STIKK, etc., the meeting was opened and directed by the head of the working group for the drafting of this law, Mimoza Kusari Lila.

Justifying the undertaking of this initiative by the commission, Kusari Lila said that digitization is the number one topic for all developed societies, therefore, according to her, Kosovo should also be in step with these developments.

She said the purpose of this public hearing is to discuss in principle the issues that this law affects and to create an idea for the institutional capacities for the implementation of this law, while also evaluating the impact of its implementation.

Regarding the substantive aspects of the draft law, the engaged expert, Virtyt Ibrahimaga, gave clarifications, while other attendees contributed to their discussions.

EIC continually stressed the importance of the draft law being in line with EU legislation in this field.



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European Investors Council had the pleasure to meet with her Excellency Ambassador of Israel to Kosovo, Ms. Tamar Ziv. Throughout this meeting, the economic cooperation in different sectors of interest for both countries was discussed. Special emphasis was put on high growth potential sectors such as ICT, agriculture, and energy.

EIC is open to give its input in all topics discussed throughout this meeting, and to continue working closely with any relevant stakeholder, to improve the business environment in Kosovo.



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Interview with Mr. Mergim Cahani, Founder and CEO of Gjirafa

Gjirafa is one of the fastest-growing tech companies in Central Europe, with an ultimate mission to build the internet economy in the CE region. Gjirafa's ecosystem of services encompasses e-commerce, video streaming, online marketing, cloud computing, and entertainment production. In this edition of EIC Newsletter, we bring an exclusive interview with Mr. Mergim Cahani, Founder and CEO of Gjirafa.

Gjirafa is one of the fastest-growing tech companies not only in Kosovo, but also in the Western Balkans region. Due to this huge success, you have recently been invited to the EBRD's Blue Ribbon Flagship Program. Can you tell us how you plan to expand Gjirafa by benefiting from this program in the future?

We are proud of being identified and selected by the EBRD as one of the most trusted, growing companies to join the BRP from the region. The Blue Ribbon membership is just one testament of our commitment for long-term and sustainable growth towards our mission of building the Internet Economy in the region. As we are growing strong in Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia, our next phase is the expansion in the nearby countries spanning Montenegro Serbia and Bulgaria, and the benefit from the BRP would consist primarily in gaining from knowledge-sharing and advising services, as well as access to financing. Last but not least it is the EBRD's support in forging stronger links between us and other like-minded entrepreneurs and enterprises spanning the Bank's 26 Countries of Operation, that will further help Gjirafa expand in the Western Balkans region.

Apart from employing more than 300 people, Gjirafa has now opened the Leadership Institute of Future Engineers (LIFE). How is this program structured and how can future engineers benefit from it?

Leadership Institute of Future Engineers (LIFE) - LIFE from Gjirafa is a non-formal professional training, aiming to admit, prepare and employ top 5% of future engineers with leadership attributes, by utilizing a strong curriculum, outstanding lecturers/instructors, in-job guidance from senior engineers, and innovative technology to achieve learning objectives. It prepares three tech profiles: FrontEnd, BackEnd and DevOps.

LIFE is an intensive 9-months training organized in four periods, with a total of 36 weeks of training. Throughout the training program fellows are engaged full time (40 hours per week) in theoretical and practical lectures, studying, practical work, assessments, internship, projects, tasks, etc.

The curriculum is a combination of theoretical and practical aspects of the professional field, prepared based on good international models, but adapted to the needs of Gjirafa and other collaborating companies of LIFE. In addition to the professional part, during the training fellows have courses for important aspects (Business and Leadership) related to working in the company such as: leadership, self-initiative, management, planning and organization, coordination, communication (writing / speaking), team work, culture company, critical thinking, recruitment, etc.

Each fellow admitted to LIFE has a full scholarship, and each has the opportunity to attend the training for free. The scholarship is covered by the employment company (stipend model), provided that the fellow successfully completes the LIFE and agrees to work for at least a 2-years period in the employment company (with salary and conditions agreed between the fellow and company). So, each fellow that successfully completes the LIFE has a guaranteed job in Gjirafa and other collaborating companies of LIFE.

We have often heard Gjirafa being referred to as the Amazon of the Balkans. You now successfully operate in Kosovo, Albania, and the Republic of North Macedonia with your e-commerce platform. Are you planning any new expansions in this regard?

Gjirafa has established itself as one of the fastest-growing tech companies in Central Europe and as a regional industry leader in e-commerce. Our Platforms have transformed the online retail landscape and become standard-bearers in Kosovo, Albania and N. Macedonia. Customers can always rely on Gjirafa to offer an ever-growing selection of products with flexible delivery options and the best prices. The balkan region represents an underserved market with incredible growth potential, and Gjirafa's plan is to continue growing into new markets as well. We look forward to expanding further into Montenegro, Bulgaria and Serbia.

Gjirafa has launched many impactful projects. With the creation of Gjirafa Prime, you have provided easy-access to the Albanian cinematic industry for everyone, at all times. How is this project developing?

GjirafaVideo is an online platform broadcasting original content, majority of which is produced from GjirafaStudios. An essential part of gjirafaVideo is also the partnership with Kosovo's Cinematography Center (KCC) - who make movies available for the audience through gjirafaVideo.

GjirafaPrime was launched in February 2022 and it makes movies available immediately after the world's premieres. As gjirafaVideo complements its growth with content produced from gjirafaStudios, and referring to the success of Rrushe (<https://rrushe.com>) TV Series, the goal for gjirafaPrime is also to expand its exclusive content produced in-house.

GjirafaPrime aspires and is working towards being the main digital cinematography source for the most qualified Albanian movies, tv series, and shows.

Gjirafa is one of the biggest supporters of the ESports Community in Kosovo. What do you think is the future of this industry in our country and beyond?

After two years of successfully organizing one of the biggest e-sports events for the region, the Gjirafa Masters League, Gjirafa is now a partner of GRID in organizing the Champions of Champions Tournament (CCT). CCT is one of the newest global CS:GO competitions that brings an incredible fight for one of the biggest prize pools in CS:GO history - \$3,400,000. Gjirafa is responsible for organizing the tournament exclusively for all South of Europe.

We at Gjirafa believe that e-sports belongs among the traditional sports. The e-sports scene has experienced a surge in the whole region and especially in Kosovo. The big success of Bad News Eagles in Antwerp Major 2022 has changed the way e-sports are perceived in the country and it has given momentum to improvement of the e-sports scene. Immediately after the success of BNE, other teams like X-team and Illyrians have immediately taken the CS:GO scene more seriously and have immediately started performing better in the regional scene. It doesn't happen often that the prime minister of one country pays a visit to a CS:GO team and actively shares them on social media. For this reason, the momentum is on the side of e-sports. Gjirafa aims at building on this momentum in order to establish a long-lasting e-sports scene and provide a hub for the community. The future is e-sports, and more about Gjirafa e-sports can be found at Gjirafa.gg

What is a lesson you as an entrepreneur have learned from dealing with recent crises, first the COVID-19 outbreak, then Russia's invasion of Ukraine, both affecting the global supply chain?

At gjirafa we always look ahead and plan for our future growth but you also need to be prepared for the unexpected. Although Covid boosted e-commerce around the world, it also impacted how people would work. This required flexibility of people and a company who can adapt quickly to a new situation. Due to the flat organizational structure, Gjirafa is very agile and quick to respond. Currently the invasion of Ukraine has not yet had a direct impact on our organization, with the exception of increased fuel prices. We do expect an effect of increasing inflation and are working on scenarios to deal with this.

Crises throughout these years have both been opportunities as well as challenges for Gjirafa, and especially for the supply chain. We have had to adapt to unknown situations quickly (same as everybody else), especially during the first COVID-19 outbreak.

Being faced with:

- an ever-growing trend for online shopping in a market where traditional shopping has been the main method of shopping until now,
- limitations in local logistics continuously,
- the lack of products in the market from the best selling brands becoming more and more evident as time went on,
- the increase of prices in every service and product; we have learned,
- how to become even more adaptive,
- the power of automated processes,
- and especially the importance of solid partnerships.

What is your message to the readers of the Newsletter of the European Investors Council?

We are constantly looking for ambitious, passionate, and mission driven people to join our mission in building the Internet economy in the region. If one desires to make a fast jump in their career, to learn from the environment of startups that have a fast growth momentum, while contributing to the well being of the society in a region that is often neglected by the global innovators, then Gjirafa may be a place for you. Do not hesitate to contact us to join our team at jobs@gjirafa.com.



Mr. Mergim Cahani, Founder and CEO of Gjirafa

IPKO completes 5G tests, aims to launch service as soon as possible

Kosovar full-service provider IPKO has successfully completed trials of 5G technology, achieving peak download speeds of 1.2Gbps on the platform. The company did not disclose further details of the tests but claimed that it would soon be ready to provide 5G services to customers and would aim to do so as soon as possible. CEO Tomaz Selkaj was quoted as saying of the operator's 5G plans: 'We always want our customers to have the best possible mobile internet experience, and we are very excited to be able to offer to our customers next-generation technology through 5G. Moreover, to meet demand for higher bandwidth we are also investing on fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) infrastructure and continue to expand 4G coverage and capacity'.



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Limak Prishtina Airport welcomes British Airway flights from Prishtina to London

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Limak Kosovo International Airport has brought back flights to and from London, through British Airways. Officials of the Airport have noted that they are excited to welcome British Airways flight LHR-PRN-LHR.

Kosovo Assembly approves a new Law on Trademarks

A new Law on Trademarks has entered into force in July 2022. This Law defines the conditions and procedures for the registration of trademarks and the rights deriving from the registration and implementation of these rights. While the conditions and procedures for the registration and protection of the Trademark have been in force for many years, the new legislation makes important changes and, in particular, aligns Kosovo's rules more closely with the EU Trademark legislation and standards.

Kosovo Assembly approves a new Law on Protection of Air from Pollution

A new Law on Protection of Air from Pollution has entered into force in July 2022. This Law aims to determine the competencies and responsibilities of the institutions in order to ensure the right of citizens to live in an environment with clean air, by protecting the human health, fauna, flora and natural and cultural values of the environment from air pollution. The new law makes important changes and, in particular, aligns Kosovo's rules more closely with the EU Trademark legislation and standards.



Europe as a Task: Czech Republic Assumes Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Chargé d' Affaires of the Czech Embassy in Kosovo, Pavel Bílek, and the EU Ambassador in Kosovo, Tomáš Szunyog, organized in Pristina, the opening ceremony of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union during which the priorities of the Czech Presidency for the next six months were presented.

The motto of the Czech Presidency is Europe as a Task: Rethink, Rebuild, Repower, a title of President Václav Havel's speech from 1996 in which he called on Europeans to take responsibility for global environmental and social and economic challenges and lead by example.

“Czech Republic is assuming the Presidency of the Council of the European Union amidst the Russian invasion against Ukraine, which has completely overhauled the geopolitical situation on our continent. It is making us re-evaluate many of our current approaches and premises,” said Bílek.

The overall objective of the Czech Presidency is to contribute to creating the conditions for the security and prosperity of the EU in the context of the European values of freedom, social justice, democracy, the rule of law and environmental responsibility. The EU must focus on ensuring security together with NATO, and on defending human rights, a free way of life, and liberal democracy together with the United States, United Kingdom, and other democratic states outside the EU.

The five broad priorities of the Czech Presidency include managing the Ukrainian refugee crisis and post-war recovery, energy security, strengthening Europe's defense capacities and cyber security, strategic resilience of the European economy, and resilience of democratic institutions.

Western Balkans, together with Ukraine, Indo-Pacific and the Sahel, is among the priority areas of the Czech Presidency. It will strive to achieve concrete progress in the EU enlargement negotiations and to support the accession process of Western Balkans countries.



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Save Gas for a Safe Winter: Commission proposes gas demand reduction plan to prepare EU for supply cuts

The European Union faces the risk of further gas supply cuts from Russia, due to the Kremlin's weaponisation of gas exports, with almost half of our Member States already affected by reduced deliveries. Taking action now can reduce both the risk and the costs for Europe in case of further or full disruption, strengthening European energy resilience.

The Commission is therefore proposing a new legislative tool and a European Gas Demand Reduction Plan, to reduce gas use in Europe by 15% until next spring.

All consumers, public administrations, households, owners of public buildings, power suppliers and industry can and should take measures to save gas. The Commission will also accelerate work on supply diversification, including joint purchasing of gas to strengthen the EU's possibility of sourcing alternative gas deliveries.

The Commission is proposing a new Council Regulation on Coordinated Demand Reduction Measures for Gas, based on Article 122 of the Treaty. The new Regulation would set a target for all Member States to reduce gas demand by 15% between 1 August 2022 and 31 March 2023. The new Regulation would also give the Commission the possibility to declare, after consulting Member States, a 'Union Alert' on security of supply, imposing a mandatory gas demand reduction on all Member States.

Gas reduction by 15%



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