



EIC Members meet with Kosovo Competition Authority to discuss free market protection and effective competition

Following continuous meetings with state institutions, EIC has organized a meeting with Kosovo Competition Authority (KCA). Present in this discussion were the head of KCA, Mrs. Naime Binaku-Isufi, other representatives from this institution Ms. Nafije Osdautaj, and Mr. Selajdin Beqa, as well as representatives of EIC member companies (Sharrcem, ProCredit Bank, IPKO, SIGAL, Deloitte etc.)

The Kosovo Competition Authority is an institution with the main vision and mission to protect the free and effective competition of the market. Effectively, this discussion was necessary for EIC members taking into consideration the current situation of the economy, including the situation with inflation.

During this meeting, the head of KCA, Mrs. Naime Binaku Isufi stated that the most urgent task of this institution is to serve the functioning of the free market. She noted that the free market can only be ensured with free competition, appealing to businesses to address all concerns related to the non-functioning of the free market with KCA.

Whereas, members of EIC present in this meeting raised some important issues, from the perspective of foreign investors in Kosovo, taking into account the international experience of these companies.

EIC and other business organizations meet the Deputy Managing Director of IMF, Mr. Bo Li

European Investors Council, Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, German-Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, and the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, met the Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mr. Bo Li. During this meeting, the latest economic developments in the country, the perspective of the private sector in the improvement and updating of the legislation which enables the improvement of the business environment in Kosovo were discussed. In this meeting, EIC was represented by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms. Eriola Bibolli, General Manager of ProCredit Bank Kosovo.



Ms. Eriola Bibolli, General Manager of ProCredit Bank Kosovo

Interview with Mr. Zef Dedaj, Acting General Director of Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA)

Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA) is the Kosovar state agency mandated to promote and support investments, exports, tourism, SMEs, and special economic zones in the Republic of Kosovo. What type of services does KIESA offer today?

KIESA is a state executive agency that functions within the Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, whose mandate is to promote and attract foreign investments (including strategic investment activities), promote exports through national and international trade fairs, B2B meetings and economic forums, promote and support tourism, develop economic zones and support SMEs through grant schemes in the Republic of Kosovo. Moreover, KIESA provides services to foreign investors before the investment process has been made in Kosovo, by helping companies to start and register a new business in Kosovo and during the whole application process for obtaining all necessary permits and licenses. KIESA also helps to organize meetings with local and central institutions, with local and foreign businesses and assists companies to find the location either inside or outside the economic zones for establishing their business. Moreover, KIESA provides the following services in this direction, such as:

- Cooperates with exporting companies, business associations, donor community, and tour operators to coordinate activities related to the export promotion sector's activity.
- Aftercare service (care offered to investors after the investment has been made).
- Address the issues that companies face.
- Helps to export companies to place their goods in international markets.
- Support the organization of trade fairs at home and abroad.
- Cooperate with business associations on developing promotional policies and exporting initiatives.
- Organize Public-Private Dialogue through "Small Business Days" activities in 7 regions of Kosovo.
- Provide grants for production lines to private sector companies focusing on increasing capacity productions and internationalizing and promoting Kosovo's products abroad.

- Internship business, this project enables newly graduated students two-month internship in the private business sector.
- "Women in Business" trade fair supports women in business to promote their products and find new markets.
- Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund supports small and medium-size enterprises to have easier access to finance in commercial banks by guaranteeing a part of the collateral.
- Inform potential investors on Economic Zone's primary and secondary legislation.
- Receive, review and evaluate applications provided by economic zones developers.
- Cooperates with municipalities of Kosovo on creating and establishing the Economic Zones infrastructure.

To what extent have the activities of KIESA been changed due to the COVID-19 crisis?

The pandemic of COVID-19 crisis has significantly affected the way activities were carried out because all scheduled events had to be conducted virtually, and many other activities like B2B, economic forums and trade fairs have been canceled. However, we have made every effort to comply with our plan to maintain constant communication with local and foreign investors to meet KIESA's objectives. Therefore, in summary, we can say that despite the existence of unusual working conditions, we have taken all necessary measures to put our objectives and plans for supporting and promoting the private sector into practice.

We have noticed that KIESA is putting effort in promoting the products made in Kosovo. Could you let us know more about the activities you have developed in this regard?

KIESA's main objective is to support Kosovo's private sector through concrete programs and projects. Therefore, there are several measures in place within the framework of these plans that support the private sector, based on the annual program such as:

- Kosovar businesses expanding internationally.
- Financial support (machinery and products).
- Promoting goods and locating international markets.

- Finding partners via working with global organizations in their networks of collaboration.
- Locating several sites for investments in the nation.
- Enhancing regulations and the legal system.
- Provide necessary linkages domestically and internationally.
- Participate in internal and international events.
- Investment and Trade Forums.
- Domestic and International Fairs etc.

Many investment support agencies worldwide have integrated climate goals and green investment promotion into their strategies. Is KIESA doing any work to promote green investment opportunities in Kosovo?

The green agenda is in our sights, and we are aware of the adoption of new ways of investment promotion, especially green investment promotion. A green investment framework has much in common with a general policy framework for investment; therefore, KIESA aims to promote Green Investments, including a circular economy in all forms, by addressing such issues to be integrated through the policy-making process and then implemented in practice. In doing so, we remain committed to working on that with our partners and relevant stakeholders.

You have been recently elected as Acting General Director of KIESA. In your opinion, what can be done to further expand and improve the services of the Agency?

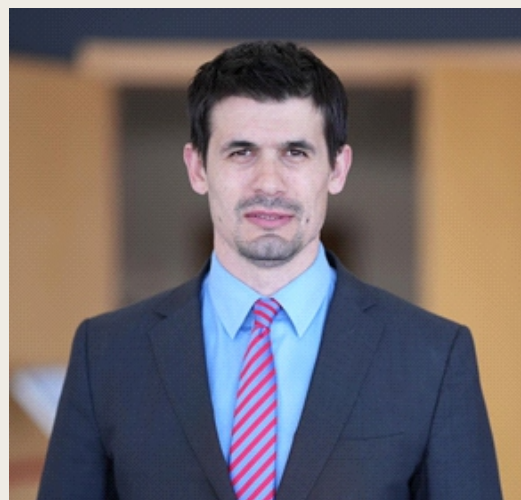
During the first six months of 2022, KIESA directly contacted about 204 foreign businesses registered in Kosovo, and 54 potential investors were welcomed at the KIESA meeting. As a result, the foreign direct investments for January - June 2022 have increased by 39.74% compared to the first six months of 2021, and exports for the same period showed an increase of 29.23% compared to 2021. However, it is worth noting that the Draft Law on Sustainable Investments has been finalized and is now expected to be forwarded to the Government for approval. Therefore, with the entry into force of this law, we will draft the new regulation, including the organizational structure of the KIESA, through an innovative organogram. In so doing, an aftercare division and complaining mechanism will be established along with the number of staff and services. Furthermore, to increase the scope of

services, I aim to increase the number of staff who possess critical thinking, skills capabilities and speak English fluently. Though, parallel to this, we have taken concrete actions from KIESA where we have transferred additional professional staff intending to strengthen KIESA. For example, we currently have a transfer in the position of the head of the export promotion sector, and we are also in the process of strengthening the SME sector. Nevertheless, significant changes are foreseen upon the new law entering into force.

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

All local and foreign enterprises are encouraged to use KIESA's services as we link the private sector and the government. This is a clear message we are conveying. We all have a crucial role in ensuring that our economy continues thriving, providing opportunities for our businesses and good jobs for our people. Today is a great illustration of one tenet of our strategic plan, assuring that all our investments in innovation and technology are converted into businesses.

In conclusion, KIESA remains committed to accurately representing and addressing the private sector needs, attracting more investments, developing economic zones, improving trade balance by supporting SMEs through grant schemes, and promoting exports of Kosovo. Finally, further strengthening and enhancing the role of the innovation ecosystem will improve Kosovo's position in reliable international reports.



Mr. Zef Dedaj, Acting General Director of Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA)



Western Balkans Digital Summit is held for the first time in Kosovo

The 5th Western Balkans Digital Summit was held on September 21st and 22nd, 2022, in Prishtina. The Ministry of Economy organized the event in association with other public and private institutions, which are actively involved in transforming the country into a sustainable digital environment.

The 5th edition of Digital Summit hosted high-level participants from the European Commission, EU member states, RCC, representatives of the Western Balkan countries, International Financial Institutions, renowned experts in the ICT sector, and representatives of the private sector.

This edition was supported by ProCredit Bank, where part of the discussion panels were two representatives from ProCredit bank; Eriola Bibolli, General Manager of ProCredit Bank in Kosovo, as well as Argjira Kadrijaj Dushi, Head of the Business Development Unit, who shared the experiences of #ProCredit bank and the importance of digitization in the economy.

Coca-Cola HBC launches Coca-Cola Youth Empowered program

The second phase of the Coca-Cola Youth Empowered program, aimed at empowering young people with new skills and knowledge, started in September.

The goal of this project, implemented by Coca-Cola HBC Kosovo for 6 consecutive years, is to prepare young people for the labor market, through concrete advice and practices that help career development. Coca-Cola Youth Empowered program offers free training for young people in soft skills, business skills, and digital skills with lecturers who have extensive knowledge and experience in these fields.

During the first phase of this year's project, under the motto "Shaping the future", Coca-Cola HBC Kosovo trained 619 young people, through online classes, participation in universities and presentations in ICK classes.



Sigal is officially the general sponsor of the Women's Super League in Kosovo football

SIGAL UNIQA Group Austria, which has long been a partner of the Football Federation of Kosovo (FFK), is now officially the general sponsor of the Women's Super League in Kosovo football, which is now renamed to "SIGAL WOMEN'S SUPERLIGA".

The sponsorship agreement was signed at the premises of the FFK in Pristina by its president, Mr. Agim Ademi and CEO of SIGAL Group, Mr. Avni Ponari



Mr. Ponari expressed his happiness for the possibility of cooperation with FFK and for the contribution that this company will make to the development of women's football in Kosovo. While, according to Mr. Ademi, women's football is one of the main priorities of this mandate, so he promised to work continuously to create the best possible conditions. The largest insurance company in the region, SIGAL UNIQA Group Austria will continue to be close to sports communities in the future.

Raiffeisen Bank launches RISE internship and scholarship program for engineers

Raiffeisen Bank in Kosovo for the first time is launching the RISE program - Raiffeisen Internship & Scholarship for Engineers.

This program aims to support and develop students from the field of information technology in Kosovo, through the provision of scholarships and internships. So, in addition to the scholarship they will receive, students will have the opportunity to become part of the paid internship program at the Raiffeisen Bank Central Offices.

Students will have the opportunity to choose the department and field where they prefer to focus in their career, while the internship includes training and learning activities with instructors and local and international experts of the Technology Community at Raiffeisen bank.

This year, the beneficiaries of the RISE program will be (16) sixteen students who are pursuing studies in the field of technology and information (or similar courses, such as Computer Science and Engineering, Data Science, Management Information Systems, Business Analytics) in institutions of higher education in Kosovo. The RISE program was developed within the activities of the Technology Community "Tech4Tech Community" at Raiffeisen bank which consists of four main departments: Technology and Information Department, Security Department, Data and Analytics Department and Competence Center.





The EU and Kosovo sign the agreement for the first IPA III annual financing programme; Kosovo to benefit from a new EUR 63.96 million

Kosovo and the European Union signed today the first annual financing agreement under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance III (IPA III) worth EUR 63.96 million.

Following the signing and entry into force of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement between the EU and Kosovo, this was one of the last formal steps enabling the gradual disbursement of the EU's financial assistance to Kosovo under the IPA III framework partnership agreement covering the 2021-2027 period. The Assembly of Kosovo will also need to ratify the Agreement. Through 14 consecutive annual financing programmes from 2007 to 2020, under IPA I and IPA II, the EU has thus far provided Kosovo with more than EUR 1.21 billion in financial assistance.

"The initial 63.96 million euros from IPA III, will be used to enhance the competitiveness of Kosovo's agri-food sector and to help achieve EU's economic accession criteria. Funding will further be directed towards improving the protection of human rights and advancing gender equality, as well as improving the provision of municipal services and security and public safety in Kosovo," said the EU Ambassador in Kosovo, Tomas Szunyog.

"The EU funding will also be used to enhance the environmental protection in Kosovo, in line with the best EU practices, and to strengthen the capacities of the Kosovo administration to comply with EU

standards," added Szunyog. The annual IPA III funding will be combined with additional EUR 16 million from Kosovo Government and funding by other partners amounting to EUR 3.8 million.

"Today we will begin to concretely benefit from the assistance the EU offers to Kosovo through the IPA III funds. The financing agreement for the IPA 2021 annual programme is the first agreement for projects under the IPA III funds and we are confident that we will use to the maximum all our potential to benefit from IPA III, to promote reforms and achieve the standards necessary to bring Kosovo closer to the EU," said the First Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Development and Dialogue, Besnik Bislimi. The EU remains Kosovo's largest trading partner and the largest provider of financial assistance.

The EU will provide a new financial instrument for emergency cases against economic crises

Difficulties in the supply of masks, protective equipment and respirators during the pandemic showed that the European Union is not prepared for crises. With a new emergency instrument, the EU now aims to be prepared.

The draft law presented in Brussels aims to avoid shortages of important strategic products. Manufacturers may be forced to supply Europe as a priority and not the US or Asian countries. The EU no longer has to wait for months to be supplied with key goods as happened in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The Single Market Emergency Instrument (SMEI) should equip Europe for 'extreme cases'", emphasized the Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton.



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