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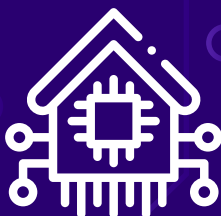
**Nukleus Beekeeping Association
to begin Beeswax production
in the Municipality of Gracanica**

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**New Career Center in Vitia
to help students navigate the
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**Kosovo-based 'Shkolla Digjitalë'
signs agreement with one of the biggest
language schools in the world 'Berlitz'
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**Rebounding from the pandemic:
How a make-shift van is preparing
the next welders of Kosovo**



1.



NUKLEUS BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION to begin Beeswax production in the Municipality of Gracanica



This week we were delighted to mark the beginning of beeswax production in the Municipality of Gracanica, in Laplje Selo/Lapllasellë! Bees are the world's most important pollinator of food crops. Around 1/3 of all the food that we consume each day relies on pollination by bees. In Kosovo, though the beekeeping industry is growing and holds great potential, one of the biggest hurdles for beekeepers is a lack of quality beeswax plates, which are an essential supply for quality production of honey, honey milk, propolis, etc.



**WITH 40 MEMBERS
WHO OWN
1,000 BEEHIVES**

Nukleus Beekeeping Association has great market knowledge and a wide network of collaborators in the beekeeping industry in Kosovo. EYE supported Nukleus in developing a self-sustainable business plan and procuring beeswax machines--a systemic intervention which will help not just Nukleus, but the entire ecosystem of beekeepers in Kosovo, estimated to have a total of 100,000 beehives, who can now use quality beeswax to expand their business, hire new employees, and increase competitiveness.



The president of the Association of Beekeepers "Nukleus", **Mladen Djokic**, stated that beekeepers will make high-quality wax with the help of their new machinery.

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Behind us is the whole machine that allows us to sterilize our own wax and produce the necessary and only ingredient that bees use, and that is wax. This machine will not be at the service of only local beekeepers, but all beekeepers in the municipality of Gracanica, and beyond,

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said Djokic.

Although he is relatively new in the business, **Sinisa Djordjevic** from Gracanica owns 40 beehives. His plan, he says, is to get to a total of 100 beehives.

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Before this, we were buying everything and anything, wax of dubious quality and paraffin. We offer it to the bees in the hive, but the bees simply don't cross it, and also don't pull out a frame where they would store food and brood. So this machine really means a lot to us,"

said Sinisa Djordevic.

Zivorad Petkovic, one of the more experienced beekeepers, said that it's important to them that now they have quality beeswax this close to home.

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The most expensive commodity for beekeepers is time. We had to go to very far places to buy good-quality wax. We were visiting regional fairs in Belgrade, Skopje, Nis, and even there it was hard to find the quality of beeswax plates, not to mention time in transportation. I am also happy that we as more experienced generation can provide knowledge to young people, who are energetic and will to improve existing things. It works well so far."

The Municipality of Gracanica also contributed greatly--providing Nukleus with premises free-of-charge, which they can use to manufacture beeswax. The mayor of Gracanica, **Srdjan Popovic**, thanked the SDC project EYE and Swiss Government for the investment and pointed out that the functioning of the Association "Nukleus" is very important for this municipality.

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There are over 100 beekeepers on the territory of the municipality of Gracanica, we have about 3,000 hives and that is something that really makes us happy: the fact that people can make a living from what they produce themselves. This is a signal to all young people who have innovative ideas and everyone who works on employing young people, the Municipality will meet them,"

said Popovic.



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2.



NEW CAREER CENTER IN VITIA to help students navigate the uncertainty of 2020



Yesterday we had the pleasure to mark the inauguration of a new career center in Vitia, made possible as a result of a co-investment between SDC, & The Municipality of Vitia.



THIS CAREER CENTER WILL PROVIDE COUNSEL FOR HUNDREDS OF PUPILS

Gradually contribute to addressing the skills mismatch that has been a defining challenge for Kosovo's job market, affecting all layers of society. In 2020, as the pandemic unfolded, students all across Kosovo found themselves in uncharted territories, and their transition from school-to-work became particularly challenging as the labor market experiences enormous disruptions. This year has shown us that now, more than ever, career guidance is desperately needed.

We need career centers to teach students how to adjust to the uncertainty of 2020, to build confidence and empower them, to identify their skills, to facilitate employment, and to finally equip them with the ability to resiliently navigate the world of work. For Vocational Education & Training, career guidance is especially important as it improves the efficiency of education; strengthens ties with the labor market & the private sector; and increases enrollment.

Together with a range of local partners such as AVETAE, we have already established career guidance centers in 8 Vocational Education schools across Kosovo. This will be the 9th center, and we hope that this model can convince other schools and municipalities to enter into a similar cooperation for offering career guidance, even without external funding.



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3.



KOSOVO-BASED 'SHKOLLA DIGJITALE' SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH ONE OF THE BIGGEST LANGUAGE SCHOOLS IN THE WORLD 'BERLITZ'

to expand to potentially 500 new locations worldwide



We've grown accustomed to hearing of Kosovo-based ICT companies adopting global services and standards. But instances when Kosovar companies export services globally are few and far between. Now, in a newly signed deal, Shkolla Digjitale (The Digital School) is to expand their technology education for children worldwide in 500 potential new locations—from Hong Kong and Germany, to the USA, Mexico, and more.



There's a huge sense of pride in our team—we started something very small in Prishtina which is now impacting youth all over the world,"

says **Hana Qerimi**, co-founder of The Digital School. "Everything still feels a little unreal—it started from just a conversation, and now we're operating in so many countries. It took a huge amount of research, work, dedication, and persistence to achieving this, and we're working around the clock to let the world know that it's not just the digital school, but that all Kosovars are hard-working!"



The new contract with the global course giant Berlitz US will enable The Digital School's own children's technology education curricula and training to be taught in over 500 existing Berlitz locations. Berlitz is a global technology education juggernaut which empowers young people to navigate digital transformation and take advantage of the opportunities the future holds.

EYE made a targeted investment in The Digital School to improve their marketing and branding, and help them position their brand and services internationally. The ICT field in Kosovo has great potential: it's perhaps one of a few sectors with a positive trade balance, where the country exports greater value than it imports. It can boost economic development and create thousands of new jobs.

From Humble Beginnings to Global Scale-Up

Shkolla Digjitale is a Kosovo-based business that offers programming and information & communication technology courses to children and adolescents. It's an after-hours program founded by two Kosovar business and tech enthusiasts Hana Qerimi and Darsej Riziaj, with the vision to equip Kosovar youth with the right skills to succeed in life and work. The company has already trained hundreds of youngsters in Kosovo in HTML, CSS, Javascript, and other digital skills.

After expanding locally, The Digital School opened their first franchise in Slovenia, in 2018, making it a huge success story that would open up doors for further expansion. Macedonia and Bosnia were quick to follow, which also prompted the team to start blending language teaching into their tech curricula.



Young people learn programming languages via technology these days, so we began blending it into our curricula,” says Hana. “This is when we came into contact with Berlitz US, and after several calls, the Berlitz director for the EMEA region came to visit us in Prishtina.” Soon after, piloting phases began in Germany, namely in Berlin, Frankfurt, Erfurt, and Dresden—all of them turning into a success.

As the pandemic unfolded and countries found themselves in lockdown, The Digital School—having a highly agile team—developed new software and management systems and quickly adapted their modules for online learning. With the new learning system proving successful in Kosovo, Berlitz recognized its potential to grow globally, and an agreement followed to start online teaching in the USA, Mexico, Hong Kong, and more.

This enabled The Digital School's own children's technology education curricula to be taught in potentially over 500 existing Berlitz locations. There will be in-person and digital-training, and The Digital School is slated to support growth by offering the support of their curricula development team, technical support team, and their marketing and sales team.

“Programming is currently the most in-demand job, and what we are offering will greatly impact kids and teens all over the world,” says Hana. “We also expect to start cooperating with public schools and support them in keeping up with new trends and technological advancements in teaching.

Targeted investment in agile, tech-savvy training providers, as shown above, builds connectivity and supports the digitalization of the wider economy. In 2020, the ability to provide access to modular and flexible training through digitalization and blended learning is crucial to ensuring long-term sustainability. Fostering inclusive skills development is key to what EYE does in Kosovo to enable youth to acquire in-demand skills that lead to better employment prospects.

The Digital School is a prime example of how a systemic investment can go a long way, and not only change the digital learning landscape in Kosovo, but also position local businesses globally and impact global approaches to non-formal education.



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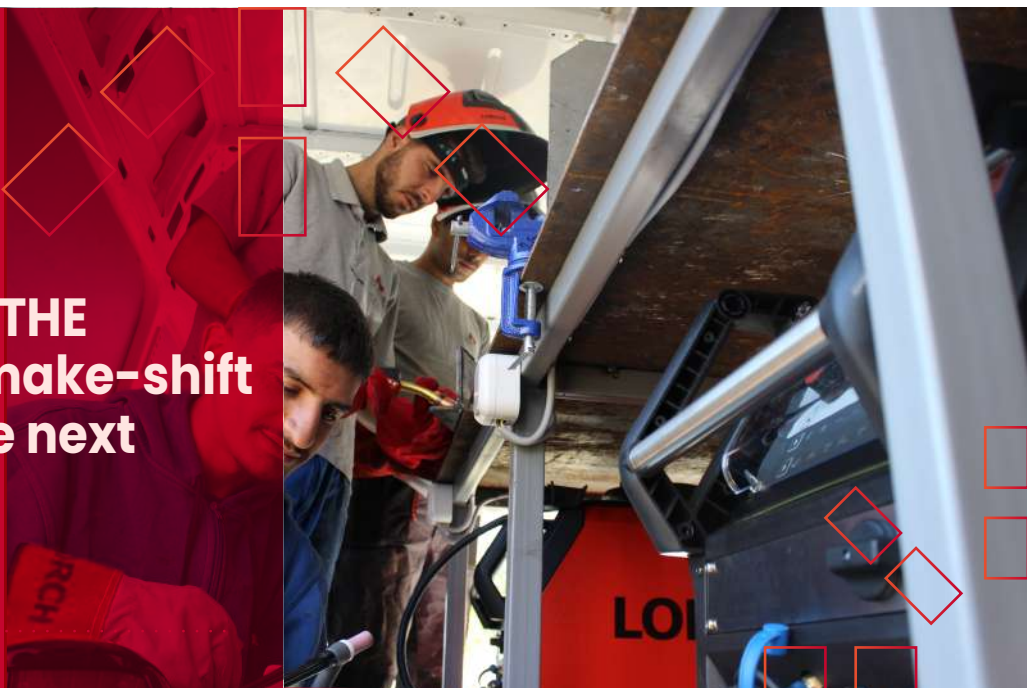
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4.



REBOUNDED FROM THE PANDEMIC: How a make-shift van is preparing the next welders of Kosovo



As the metal processing sector in Kosovo grapples with the repercussions of COVID-19, SDC helps establish innovative on-the-go welding training and certification venture slated to aid the welding industry navigate COVID-19 disruptions, employ qualified staff, and improve the resilience of manufacturing firms.



Kosovo's history with metal processing runs deep.

The large socially-owned enterprises which once represented a pillar of the economy of the small country have now given way to smaller privatized companies that have carved a niche for themselves exporting metal products such as base metals, architectural steelwork, and heating and ventilation equipment to European markets.

Yet, despite the metal industry's huge potential for boosting economic development in Kosovo, and despite the sector's ever-increasing demand for employees, there's still a grave lack of qualified welders. Even with a startling amount of unemployment in Kosovo, especially among youth—49% of whom are jobless —finding adequately-skilled welders is tough. gjetja e saldatorëve me aftësi adekuate .

The reasons are many, but it boils down to a few things: training institutions and businesses still don't communicate with each other enough, many training-providers don't yet offer services that include internationally-recognized certifications, and there is a general lack of market information about the welding profession and trainings.

As COVID-19 made its way around Kosovo, it greatly disrupted the labor market, throwing into disarray an already fragile job market. The welding industry—like most other industries—was hit hard, and the prospect of finding qualified employees went from bad to worse.

Supporting unprecedented solutions for unprecedented times

Innovative training providers didn't stand idly by. Many are finding inventive ways to adjust to the situation. But one enterprise, called Weld Tech, was particularly imaginative—in ways that Kosovo has probably never seen before. Weld Tech's solution? An ingenious a make-shift van turned into a mobile ISO-based welding training facility with cutting-edge technology!

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COVID-19 HAS CREATED A TOUGH SITUATION, GIVING RISE TO TRAVEL LIMITATIONS FOR COMPANIES' PERSONNEL," SAYS EKREM SALLAHAJ, OWNER OF WELD TECH

who is also an international welding specialist and civil engineer. "Metal-processing companies also have sensitive working dynamics, so it's not rare that companies hesitate to send their welders for training and certification due to the busy work schedule. This is why we came up with a mobile training service that takes into account both these dynamics." Weld Tech's ingenious mobile training is held entirely inside a van, whose interiors have been completely redesigned to provide in-company welding training, saving company personnel precious travel time, and enabling them to get right back to production when they're done with training. The inconspicuous van travels around Kosovo providing training to all who seek it, all at the comfort of their workplace.

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"WE ARE THE ONLY TRAINING CENTER IN KOSOVO THAT OFFERS ISO-BASED TRAININGS AND CERTIFICATIONS IN COOPERATION WITH TUV RHEINLAND," SAYS EKREM.

"We trained over 30 candidates so far, the majority of them certified with IS 9606." Ekrem says that trainees are responding positively to the van. "The participants we get come from all sorts of backgrounds, and from different professions. They're comfortable working inside the van—it's a compact space and gives them a great feeling of really advancing their welding techniques. Welding is also in huge demand, and there is considerable interest and people don't hesitate to pay and participate."



In a nearby village close to the small city of Suhareka, Kosovo, Driton Kacaniku, a 20-year-old graduate of the welding training who comes from small village of Dubrava, is carefully joining metal parts together and polishing metal surfaces. Taking a break from work to greet us, he tells us that the training inspired him to pursue a career in welding. "The welding training allowed me to learn both theory and practice, and I got certified in the end," Driton says. "The skills I gained have helped me find work, and when I finished the training I started working here at the company [Ndertuesi shpk], which also made it possible for me to take the training. "Now I'm happy to travel to work every morning, and I want welding to be my profession."

WELD TECH IS A MEMBER OF THE METAL INDUSTRY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY CLUSTER OF KOSOVO (MIRECK)

Whose huge network of enterprises operating in the metal industry helps Weld Tech find new participants and reach out to interested parties. MIRECK also advocates for the welding profession, raising awareness of its profitability, market demand, and viability as a career choice.



In recent years, the metal industry in Kosovo has evolved greatly

New quality standards have been introduced, among which the EN 1090 is one of the most important,” says Astrit Rexhaj, Executive Director of MIRECK. “EN 1090 is a mandatory standard for exporting companies who seek new markets in the European Union, and in order to obtain it, companies must have welders who are certified.”

Astrit says that being aware of these criteria and the struggles of MIRECK’s member companies to go international, he has put a special focus on supporting certifications. “With the support of SDC through project EYE, as well as GIZ, we have certified more than 100 welders with EN ISO 9606,” he says.

But in 2020, with the government introducing social-distancing measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, new logistical challenges arose, securing travel and venues for participants became increasingly hard, and when production companies provided their premises for trainings, the learning process interfered with production processes and inconvenienced other employees. Welding machines are also expensive, and companies hesitated to rent them for training purposes. .

This is when Weld Tech came up with the idea of creating a mobile training center that could provide training to welders everywhere in Kosovo. “In our industry, this is one of the most innovative projects, and I can say without hesitation that this is one of the most important project for the metal industry, offering flexible training and certification solutions that will help companies to improve their employees’ skills and expand to international markets,” says Astrit..

SDC’s project EYE has entered into a partnership with MIRECK last year as part of our long-term goals of systematically developing long-term partnerships with the private sector to support employment opportunities and facilitate labor market transition.

At EYE, we recognized Weld Tech’s huge potential

But it was was a start-up with no means to fully invest in their mobile training venture. We supported Weld Tech in equipping the van with the state-of-the-art welding equipment, protective equipment, and industrial materials to provide the best training for participants. We’re now also helping them introduce two new trainings in Visual Inspection and Non-destructive testing of welds —services which local metal processing companies hitherto had to import from abroad.

“SDC’s support was crucial for adapting to COVID-19 and creating our mobile training service,” says Ekrem, owner of Weld Tech.

“Going through the pandemic was not easy. SDC & EYE’s help was significant for Weld Tech, and we’re very thankful for it. Now we are looking toward expanding our capabilities in the near future, hoping to be able to hire more staff and deliver more trainings.”