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Kosovo News Update

RW Robert Wexler

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US Continues Support for Kosovo

-Kosovo's PM Haradinaj met with the Director for South-Central European Affairs (US DOS) Palmer to discuss the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, visa liberalization and a new dynamic for Kosovo towards the Euro-Atlantic perspective.

-Kosovo PM Haradinaj, stated "Kosovo is lucky to have the U.S. as a strategic ally and as the most credible partner".

<http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2018/04/06/429192/gazeta-express-us-supports-creation-of-kosovo-army-says-pm-haradinaj.html>

Kosovo's Economy Sees Increased Interest

-FDI in Kosovo rose to 25.4 million euro in January, compared to 19.5 million euro in January 2017, with 5.8 million euros coming from Britain, and 4.9 million euros coming from China.

-The government is working to decrease red tape and lower the tax burden for private companies in hopes to increase domestic and foreign investors. Therefore, no taxes will be levied on imports of information technology equipment and spare parts for production equipment, and all businesses will be exempt from customs and exile duties levied on imports of raw material, semi-finished products, and production lines.

-The World Bank and Kosovo have agreed on a 14.3 million euro loan to support product certification for export markets, which will strengthen the capacity of export firms and decrease the cost of business inspections.

-The EBRD is providing TEB Bank with a 5-million-euro loan to finance energy efficient projects for individuals, housing associations, and producers and vendors of green technologies to support energy efficiency in residential buildings.

-Kosovo is in the process of trying to obtain a 20.2 million euro loan from the IDA to finance the addition of Kosovo Digital Economy program (KODE), which will increase the productivity and quality of internet to its citizens, and public and academic institutions. The KODE program aims to create jobs through a growing internet infrastructure, by developing globally competitive businesses to create a more sustainable economy.

-German development bank KfW has approved two grants worth 8.8 million euros to provide funding for agricultural projects.

-Business ties between Serbia and Kosovo are on the mend, with trade reaching 500 million euros in 2017.

-A new industrial park in Vushtrri, Kosovo will create new jobs and help alleviate poverty in the area. The creation of economic zones is appealing to investors because the parks are equipped with the appropriate infrastructure for the development of business activities.

<https://secnews.com/news/net-fdi-flow-into-kosovo-rise-30-in-jan-607435>

<https://secnews.com/news/kosovo-dropping-tax-on-it-equipment-imports-to-attract-investors-fin-min-608475>

<https://secnews.com/news/ebfd-lending-5-mln-euro-for-energy-efficiency-projects-in-kosovo-609134>

<https://secnews.com/news/kosovo-to-negotiate-25-mln-loan-with-world-banks-ida-for-digital-economy-project-609651>

<https://secnews.com/news/kosovo-approves-88-mln-euro-german-grants-for-infrastructure-employment-projects-609633>

<https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/kosovo-serbian-business-ties-withstand-political-dispute>

<http://emerging-europe.com/in-brief/kosovo-create-new-industrial-park/>

The Government of Kosovo Makes New Strides

-Kosovo is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its constitution.

-The OSCE held a three-day workshop for 60 young Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian residents to increase their understanding of police work, and to explain the benefits of joining the police force in hopes to encourage new recruits.

-The OSCE is promoting human and community rights, and is working on democratization and public-sector development.

-Kosovo has made all the necessary preparations for its membership application into the Council of Europe, and is a member of the Venice Commission and Council of European Development Bank, which are both important to the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe protects democracy and human rights, and promotes a unified Europe by encouraging cooperation on cultural, legal, and social issues.

<http://www.balkan.eu.com/kosovo-marks-the-tenth-anniversary-of-its-constitution/>

<https://www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo/377656>

<http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/kosovo-ready-for-council-of-europe-membership-bid-174014/>

Kosovo Works with European Partners

-President Thaci met with Bulgarian PM Borissov to coordinate bilateral relations, and to discuss the Euro-Atlantic agenda.

-Bulgarian PM Borissov supports Kosovo's attendance to the Sofia Summit, and asked those countries who have yet to recognize Kosovo to put aside their personal egoism.

-Bulgarian PM Borissov said that Bulgaria's committed to strengthening its bilateral relations and economic partnership with Kosovo, and is committed to a joint EU path. The two discussed cooperation in energy, economy, tourism, and investments.

-Kosovo is now recognized by over 100 countries.

-German Chancellor and President Thaci recently spoke about strengthening relations between the two countries, and Kosovo-Serbia normalization.

-Greek FM Kotzias stressed Greece's support of Kosovo's accession in international organizations.

-Kosovo is opening a new diplomatic office in Athens as the two countries are working to boost cooperation.

<http://www.balkan.eu.com/kosovo-is-expected-to-open-a-diplomatic-office-in-athens/>

<http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/greek-fm-kotzias-to-visit-kosovo-on-thursday-173958/>

<http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/bulgarian-prime-minister-to-visit-kosovo-on-monday-173966/>

<http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/eu-western-balkans-summit-top-visit-of-bulgarian-pm-in-kosovo-173978/>

<http://www.balkan.eu.com/borisov-kosovo-is-invited-to-participate-in-the-eu-summit-in-sofia/>

<http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/merkel-commends-kosovo-for-constructive-dialogue-with-serbia-in-phone-call-with-thaci-173982/>

<http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/haradinaj-asks-bulgarian-pm-to-help-kosovo-become-member-of-international-organisations-173979/>

All the best,

The Honorable Robert Wexler