



EDITOR'S NOTE:

This newsletter well illustrates CEED's growing emphasis on helping entrepreneurs build their businesses internationally. Research shows that international companies tend to be stronger companies. Entrepreneurs must understand a broader competitive landscape and position their companies accordingly; they must understand a wider array of customers/consumers, maybe even better than local providers; they must adapt their products and/or services to meet the needs to that geography; their companies must have stronger internal operating processes that are able to accommodate a more diverse and possibly more logistically challenging environment. What you will see below are several of CEED's international initiatives working to help entrepreneurs knowledgeably and efficiently address these realities, and to prepare themselves accordingly.

PRIME MINISTER OF ALBANIA KICKS OFF CEED REGIONAL CONFERENCE AND B2B

Tirana, Albania – Prime Minister Sali Berisha kicked off CEED's Fourth Annual Regional Conference and B2B meeting in Tirana, Albania on May 22, 2010. With local support from Raiffeisen Bank, the USAID Competitiveness (Rritje) and Agribusiness Projects, the American Albanian Enterprise Fund, TAM/BAS, and local Chambers of Commerce, CEED brought together more than 120 entrepreneurs from CEED centers in Bulgaria, Slovenia, Romania, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro to foster connections and fuel business expansion among themselves and those from Albania. The theme of the conference was 'Expanding Internationally and Developing Your Game Plan,' and it aimed to enlighten entrepreneurs as to why cross border business development is an important means to strengthen their companies.

The Prime Minister spoke about Albania's increasingly inviting business climate. Importantly however, he reflected on how important internationalization is for entrepreneurs from countries in which CEED operates. He affirmed that entrepreneurs in small countries *must* participate in international markets because "small economies are, by definition, hyper-global." The keynote address was presented by Ms. Karen Wilson, a Senior Fellow at the Kauffman Foundation. She reinforced Mr. Berisha's comments, highlighting *the critical role and extraordinary value of trusted*



'Small economies are, by definition, hyper-global.' Albanian Prime Minister, Sali Berisha *networks in building a viable entrepreneur ecosystem*, and how an organization such as CEED is helping to facilitate this process. More specifically, she asserted that entrepreneurs need these *well established and trusted networks* – the kind that CEED is building with its Top Class mentorship program – to confidently and efficiently expand their businesses beyond their borders. Regional entrepreneurs who took their companies across borders also spoke at the conference, providing their rationale for expanding, the key challenges they faced, and important lessons they learned. Most importantly and to make these opportunities 'come alive,' CEED, together with its partners, conducted 'matchmaking' exercises that included pre-arranged meetings among entrepreneurs, as well as 'speed connecting.' Feedback from the event has been overwhelmingly positive.



The audience at CEED's Regional Conference in Tirana, Albania

CEED KICKS OFF INTERNATIONAL TOP CLASS ICT PROGRAM

Ljubljana, Slovenia – April 22, 2010 marked the inauguration of CEED's International Top Class Program, with this first initiative targeted to ICT entrepreneurs interested in expanding their businesses regionally and internationally. The first of its kind in Southeast Europe, the initiative is reaching entrepreneurs from Slovenia, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Bulgaria. In an integrated way they are learning best practices for international business development and expansion, for establishing an international sales team, and for managing regional and global projects. Program entrepreneurs are gaining valuable experience from participating larger companies such as Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard, as well as from internationally experienced and successful entrepreneurs from the region. They as well have the opportunity to network, exchange experiences, meet potential business partners, and understand first-hand the landscape and trends in individual ICT country markets.

The first module focused on best Sales practices, with participants having the opportunity to hear from prominent providers and end-users of ICT in Slovenia including Hermes SoftLab, Avtenta, Mobitel, Vzajemna, NLB, and Marg. They discussed the current competitive environment, Slovenian ICT market trends, and the impact of technological developments on ICT usage in the Slovene economy. The program included one on one networking/business development meetings. The second session of the program took place in Bulgaria between May 13-15. It focused on Competitiveness and Growth via Outsourcing, and addressed the major operating changes that the latest technical developments in



The audience at CEED's International Top Class Program

the area have been driving. Session 3 - focused on ICT Leadership - will take place in Macedonia from June 16-18. Session 4 - focused on best practices in International ICT Business Development - will take place in Serbia from September 16-18. A fifth session in Silicon Valley in October is under development..



Macedonian entrepreneurs entering the Kosovo market via OBCK – Pristina, Kosovo

SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR FOR INT'L BUSINESS CENTER IN KOSOVO

Kosovo – With financial support from the USAID Macedonia Competitiveness Project, CEED Macedonia has just completed its first year operating the Office Business Center, Kosovo (OBCK). A pilot project designed to assess cost and impact, the center's expressed purpose is to enable and support the expansion of Macedonian companies in Kosovo. Initial results are strong. After a year of operation, 11 Macedonian companies participated and 'set up shop' at the OBCK, allowing them to jointly understand the local landscape and regulatory climate, share experiences, and form stronger networks in Kosovo – all of which would have otherwise taken each company longer to learn and at greater expense. In fact, 70% of participants affirm they would not have entered the market without OBCK's support. In addition to receiving positive feedback from participating entrepreneurs, OBCK is approaching sustainability with fees covering 90% of costs.

So far, three companies have set up permanent local operations and numerous deals between Macedonian companies and Kosovo customers have been struck. Given the success of this pilot, we will be assessing the opportunities and funding options to develop similar centers in Albania, Bosnia, and elsewhere in the region.

Center for Entrepreneurship and Executive Development (CEED) is...

... a community of high expectation entrepreneurs providing the know-how and networks needed to drive businesses forward. CEED is for entrepreneurs who want sophisticated, yet practical training and connections to finance and new markets. CEED was established by the [Small Enterprise Assistance Funds \(SEAF, www.seaf.com\)](http://www.seaf.com) with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). SEAF provides growth capital and operational support to businesses in emerging markets and those underserved by traditional sources of capital, achieving attractive risk-adjusted returns while generating meaningful local economic benefits. SEAF and CEED are based in Washington D.C. and have offices across the globe.

Peter Prighi
CEED Director
prighi@seafweb.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND OUR LOCAL COUNTRY DIRECTORS' CONTACT INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

WWW.CEED-GLOBAL.ORG

SEAF
1050 17th St. NW, Suite 1150
Washington, DC 20036 USA

