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*of the American Chamber of Commerce
in Macedonia*

It Takes a Village to Realize Internships' Potential

Photo by: Maja Janevska-Ilieva

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Bureaucratic, Inflexible Visa & Work, Residency Permits Process

New IP-related Customs Measures

Public Revenue Office Launches a Standing Business Association Forum

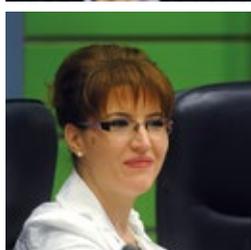




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Do Great Things





Dear AmCham Macedonia members and friends –

Thank you for picking up the summer 2015 edition of *Emerging Macedonia*. I hope you'll enjoy this issue's focus on current trends and challenges in the country's internship programs. Our hope is that these real-life intern stories will inspire students and companies alike to invest both time and care into internship programs. In this issue, we've also included pieces on several current hot topics ranging from U.S. trade policy progress to persistent expat visa and permits issues here in Macedonia.

I hope you'll agree that June's Business-University Cooperation roundtable was a successful way to highlight functioning partnerships in higher education as well as encourage more dynamism in this area in the coming year. We're also proud of the results of our first intern matchmaking event hosting by Pivara Skopje as well as our 2nd annual event connecting local suppliers with some of the best-known foreign investors.

Coming up this fall, we are planning our 15th annual General Assembly, a variety of member to member learning sessions, meetings with Public Revenue Office representatives and other key institutions as well as our traditional holiday gatherings marking the close of another busy year.

Wishing all of our readers a reinvigorating summer vacation,

Michelle Osmanli

Executive Director

It Takes a Village to Realize

By Chris Deliso

While Macedonia's Higher Education Law has required all university students to do internships since 2008, the practice is still in its nascency. Due to a traditionally sluggish labor market dominated

financial services sector are running the biggest programs in addition to the country's biggest employers in heavy industry and utilities. However, this isn't the only reason companies run internship programs. In

accepting internship applications from high school students.² Companies mentioned included Deloitte, Microsoft, Lockheed Martin, Facebook, LinkedIn and other technology firms.

U.S. companies that compete on the labor market for certain skills are now cooperating via industry organizations to increase the supply of these skills overall.

by about 30,000 small to medium enterprises (SMEs), the challenge of placing the country's 60,000 current students in impactful internships is simply unrealistic. In fact, aside from the practice not being fully recognized in Labor Law, the country's Employment Services Agency (ESA) reports that most local companies are looking for skills that don't require a university degree at all.¹ As a result, there are only a handful of promising, mutually-beneficial internship programs in the country and an oversupply of 'pro forma' internships that lack real value for both students and companies.

All over the world, companies generally run internship programs when they are actively looking to develop and hire scarce talent. The same trend holds true in Macedonia, where companies in the IT and

¹ "Анализа на потреби од вештини на пазарот на трудот" 2013-2014. Downloaded on July 2, 2015 from: <http://www.avrm.gov.mk/content/APV20132014.pdf>. The report states that surveyed companies expected just 10% of total new hires in the coming year to hold university degrees.

Macedonia, a number of large organizations that are not actively hiring are still hosting interns as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program or as a benefit they offer to children of employees or a favor to their clients.

In the United States, the internship has long been a central feature of the labor market in all sectors, public and private. But, given the relatively high unemployment rate that persists in the U.S. job market during the recovery from the global economic downturn, there are notable shifts in the internship market, affecting behavior and expectations on both sides.

One trend is that internships are being offered to younger and younger Americans. *Forbes* cited a 2014 study that found half of American employers are currently

The reason why such companies are targeting the so-called 'Generation Z' (those born since the mid-1990s) is both a strategy to "close the skills gap" and to compete for the most talented young minds "to build brand awareness early and that means high school." In other words, such companies are taking a broader view, choosing to offer paid internships to the best and brightest – not because they necessarily expect to hire them – but because they want promising young people to perceive their company as both a desirable employer and top provider of goods and services.

However, it is not only the biggest and best-known companies that are targeting younger interns. Companies that compete on the labor market for certain skills are now cooperating with one another via industry organizations in order to increase the supply of these skills overall. In the U.S. state of Indiana, for example, high school students preparing for mechanical

² Dan Schawbel, "10 Workplace Trends for 2015," *Forbes*, October 29, 2014. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2014/10/29/the-top-10-workplace-trends-for-2015>

One trend is that internships are being offered to younger and younger Americans.



Internships' Potential



engineering studies are now participating in internships in companies that recover program-related costs from the industry promotion association that runs the program. According to *US News & World Report*, “the internship pairs students in high school engineering and manufacturing programs with area companies.”³ The students work

3 “High School Students Head to Factories for Internships,” *US News & World Report*, June 22, 2015. <http://www.usnews.com/news/stem-solutions/articles/2015/06/22/high-school-students-head-to-factories-for-internships>

full-time in manufacturing or logistics over a six-week period.

While the U.S. public sector (on local and national levels) has always been a popular employer of liberal arts students, the latest internship trend caused by government policy was in fact meant to address a perceived skills gap harming American competitiveness in the hard sciences and skilled manufacturing. In 2011, President Barack Obama announced the Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (AMP), a \$500 million project that brings government, industry and universities together to “support the creation of good jobs by helping U.S. manufacturers reduce costs, improve quality, and accelerate product development.”⁴

Since industry’s current specialized job needs outpace qualified graduate numbers, internships are naturally a key component of the AMP. One example of a partner in the program is the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing, which offers research internships for undergraduate and graduate students at its “world-class” applied research facility in Virginia.⁵ Internships overlap with

4 “President Obama Launches Advanced Manufacturing Partnership,” White House Press Release, June 24, 2011. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/24/president-obama-launches-advanced-manufacturing-partnership>

5 “Intern at CCAM,” Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing, April 20, 2015. <http://www.ccam-va.com/job/interns>

college semesters, and are offered in fields related to surface engineering, manufacturing systems, machining technologies, additive manufacturing, welding and more.

Here in Macedonia, the ESA took a step in the right direction with their programs that cover many intern-related costs for companies who engage the officially unem-

With the views and preferences of foreign companies already influencing local labor market practices, both the number and quality of internship opportunities are increasing.

ployed young people (non-students), something not generally allowed by current Labor Law.⁶ Unfortunately, these programs have been rather limited in scope and do not strategically target certain skill sets or industries. They also do not help place current high school or university students in internships, since they do not appear on ESA roles.

6 For example, the ESARM Direct Grant Contract “Support to the Employment of Young People, Long-Term Unemployed and Women (II)” project funded by the European Union

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LIFE IS FOR SHARING.

Don't Waste Valuable Time – Intern!

Interview with Marija Janeva, Procurement Officer at EVN Macedonia

EVN Macedonia has welcomed over 300 students via its internship program since 2009, some of whom were later offered jobs in the company. Emerging Macedonia talked with Marija Janeva, a former EVN intern who has since become a valuable and successful company employee.

EM: How would you describe your internship experience?

Janeva: I had my internship in the Department for procurement and material management. When I started the internship I was new to the whole area of procurement, so my first responsibilities were to learn the overall procurement process, prepare bid requests, archive finished procedures, learn public procurement regulations, etc. My impression was very positive and it motivated me to learn as much as I could. I recognized right away that this was a valuable investment in my future.

EM: Out of everything you learned as intern, what would you highlight as key?

Janeva: This was my first “serious” work experience, so the first thing I had to learn was how to behave in a corporate environment. In EVN, the corporate culture was on a much higher level than I expected.

EM: How did your job offer come about?

Janeva: EVN Macedonia rewards young people who demonstrate knowledge, ambition and a good work ethic, so I was lucky to be in the right company at the right time. I had great communication with

both the Department and Group Head for Procurement of Materials and Services. About six months after my internship ended, a position was opened in the group where I had interned. I had many advantages over other candidates, especially due to my internship experience. When I got the job offer, it proved to me that EVN Macedonia really gives a fair chance to those who deliver good results and want to be a part of their team.

EM: Is this position everything you expected?

Janeva: I've now been part of EVN Macedonia's Procurement Department for almost 4 years. The difference between an internship and a job is really the level of responsibility, professional training, deeper collaboration and a sense of long term job security.

I'm constantly learning new things and working with more challenging assignments as my superiors see that I'm ready to handle them. Bigger and more interesting challenges follow a job well done; this was the case even when I was an intern. My superiors and peers are always open for help and guidance, so I'm happy with my progress. We also have a couple of formal



trainings each year, depending on department needs and the company strategy.

EM: What would you recommend to the young people considering an internship?

Janeva: I would recommend that they shouldn't hesitate. Internships can be great experiences; if possible, students should take part in more than one program. Find a good company, expand your learning horizons and don't waste valuable time. You may be surprised by some of the talents you have. If you keep a positive attitude, you'll have better luck finding a job; but don't be surprised if a job finds you first!

What is an American Intern Doing at Pivara Skopje?!

Author: Seneca Rasey, Public Affairs & Communications Intern at Pivara Skopje AD, Global Studies Major at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania

When I heard about the international internship program at my university, I immediately knew I had to apply. I have always loved learning about new cultures and I hope to live and work abroad someday, so this was a perfect opportunity to gain not only business experience but life experience as well. Lehigh University currently has student interns placed in 26 countries, covering a variety of focuses. The application process is competitive and I was offered a position in Macedonia at Pivara Skopje AD. I was interested in working at Pivara for many reasons. As one of the leading companies in Macedonia and part of the Coca-Cola and Heineken international families, there are countless opportunities to make connections and learn from the best in both the domestic and world markets.

As an intern in the Public Affairs and Communications department, the team has welcomed me with open arms and incorporated me into several of Pivara's key projects. I was very involved with the recent Art & Beer project, a unique exhibition featuring an original blend of the most famous representatives of contemporary art in Macedonia and the art of making beer, which

Pivara is particularly tied to. I am excited to attend the Galicnik wedding and the Ohrid Summer Festival with the team where Pivara continues to promote and protect Macedonia's cultural heritage. I have also learned about more of Pivara's leading CSR projects, including the Coca-Cola Cup and their Health & Safety Volunteers program in primary schools. I love seeing how the company goes beyond simply providing refreshments and to really make an impact by interacting with the community. I appreciate that the Public Affairs & Communications team trusts me with tasks and responsibilities, allowing me to truly participate and feel like a part of the company. While I am primarily interning in the Public Affairs & Communications department, I have had the chance to spend a few days with other teams, including commercial, beer production, and AFB production. It has been great to interact with other departments in the office and on the field to learn about their work as well as how the departments work together as one team.

I have developed many cross-cultural skills, both inside and outside of the workplace, and I have had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people. This internship has allowed me to gain practical experience and skills which will be applicable in any possible future career. This experience has had an incredible impact on my life and I am so thankful to Lehigh University and Pivara Skopje AD for this challenging yet rewarding opportunity. I would encourage every student to not only take advantage of any internship opportunity, but to actively seek out opportunities for themselves because it is a truly fulfilling experience which teaches self-confidence and invaluable business skills and can lead to something bigger for the future.



Transitioning from Intern to Employee - 3 Makedonski Telekom Examples

Author: Aleksandra Petrovska, Personal Assistant of the Chief Corporate Affairs Officer

My beginnings in Makedonski Telekom can only be described as a textbook example. In my final year of university, I decided I needed some practical experience after all the theory I'd learned in school. So I didn't hesitate when I saw an advertisement for an internship at Makedonski Telekom on the student news board at my university. Back in 2008, opportunities for any kind of internship were scarce, so I jumped at the chance to incorporate a little bit of practice between my exams. A while later, I received an invitation for an interview and eventually found myself in the Finance Department of the company, learning everything I could about financial transactions.



I spent almost a year as an intern, juggling classes, exams and a full time internship. However impossible it may have sounded in the beginning, I managed it by working hard. After a year of interning and my graduation, there was an internal job advertisement for a position opening in the Controlling Department. I saw it as another advancement opportunity and again, I didn't hesitate to apply. I was selected for the position and

from that point on, my career has been moving onward and upward!

Currently, I am a Personal Assistant to the Chief Corporate Affairs Officer. The experience I have gained so far is immense. I am working with great people in a great environment. Every day is a new challenge and I am looking forward to the future.

Author: Vergenica Stojanoska, Senior Associate for Customer Solutions in the Chief Information Technology Officer Area

In my senior year at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology, I took an SAP ERP system course organized by the university and Makedonski Telekom. Upon completion of the course, I was invited for a 6 month internship with Makedonski Telekom, which included working on internal web application development for the ERP in the Technology and Corporate Solutions Department. While I was interning, the department opened a fulltime position for which I interviewed and was finally hired.

Being part of the T family for three years has been a fulfilling experience, which continues to provide me with opportunities to grow professionally, attend courses to improve my skills and learn new technologies. The

internship program at Makedonski Telekom brings university students all year long, depending on company needs, helping them get an early start in their career and offering them a great experience. Looking back at my internship in the company, I remember being eager to learn yet timid; something I overcame with the help of an easygoing and helpful team of coworkers and managers.

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At OKTA, Internships are a Win-Win

OKTA runs an internship program because it benefits both students and the company. As part of its corporate strategy, the company collaborates with higher education institutions in this way. For the second year in a row, OKTA shares its knowledge and experience with students, making a significant contribution to their personal and professional development.

Students are recruited from 10 relevant university faculties, then OKTA staff assess their enthusiasm, ambition, as well as their desire to learn and build their career. Selected students accept a full-time professional engagement that lasts 3 months, where the company provides transportation and meals, as well as some additional financial compensation. Most importantly, students are then assigned a mentor, one of OKTA's department managers. Besides overseeing and tutoring, the mentors continuously monitor their engagement and development of their performance and skills.

"Speaking from experience, our mentors are quite satisfied with students' knowledge and potential in the fields in which they are interning. We strive to create an atmosphere which will enable interns to easily adjust to our organizational culture and be productive. We want to transfer our experience and expertise

to the interns via participation in concrete projects and tasks that are relevant to the company as well as to their professional development. During the internship, mentors continuously monitor the professional progress of the interns and educate, advise and support them in their work. We believe that this program helps students develop their skills and gives them self-confidence for their future professional challenges," says Katerina Solevska, OKTA's Human Resources Manager.

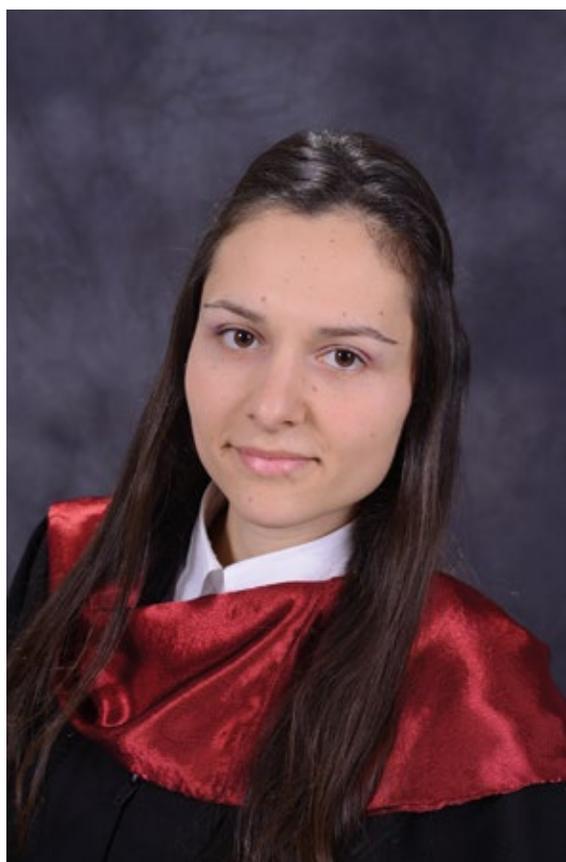
In accordance with its corporate social responsibility strategy, the company continues to develop the

program both to increase its learning value to students, but also to identify suitable candidates who could join the OKTA team, when the need arises. Through the program, company management has met a significant number of great students with the potential to suit company needs; four of whom are already part of the OKTA team!

Monika Uler Zefikj is one of the interns who, after completing the program, accepted a job offer at OKTA. Monika's Bachelor degree from Saints Cyril & Methodius University's Faculty for Mechanical Engineering with a focus on

Energy and Ecology made her a good fit for the company. She is now responsible for environmental issues in the company's Health, Safety and Environment department.

"During my OKTA internship, I was involved in projects related to my educational background, but for which I only had a theoretical understanding. I gained new knowledge by working on real tasks; the generous support I received from employees motivated me to succeed. I'm confident that my experiences both as an intern and now as an employee will contribute greatly to my career development. I am happy to be a part of the OKTA team and for the opportunity to contribute my knowledge to the progress of the company, especially in the field of environmental management," says Monika.



My successful path - interning & working for ArcelorMittal Skopje

Sanja Ivanovska, Customer Service Unit Support

The only way to achieve your goals in life is through hard work and persistence. This belief – combined with a positive attitude and self-confidence – led me to my internship at ArcelorMittal Skopje. As a young enthusiast, I was very happy for the opportunity to become part of the global ArcelorMittal Corporation.



I started my internship in September 2013 in the Customer Service Unit where I helped implement projects related to corporate health & safety standards. During those 5 months, I was surrounded by positive people and a very dynamic environment. The work helped me develop my communication and organizational skills.

My open-minded colleagues helped me to fit in and taught me how to do my job. The environment motivated me to progress and learn because I had real responsibilities and really felt like a valued member of the team.

After completing my internship, the company offered me a job. I continued working on the same issues, but my work is now more analytical. Over this year and a half, I've developed myself as a professional. I now have a foundation of essential skills that can be developed over time.

ArcelorMittal Skopje internships offer great work experience in a lot of areas. From my point of view, applied work, including fieldwork, is a vital part of scientific education. It helps students develop their understanding of science and its dependence on evidence. It also gives them essential, hands-on skills required for a career in science. All students need the opportunity to do exciting and varied experiments and research.

I encourage all enthusiasts (graduates, post-graduate students, first-time job seekers) to apply for an internship, because it is a priceless opportunity. It will help you develop first and foremost as a person, then as a productive member of the workforce. We all need to continue our personal and professional development; the best way to do this is within an organization that recognizes your potential and is willing to invest in it.

So my message to other young people is to give it your best, make your own story and be persistent!

Trust in your ideas and you'll feel free
Create and be proud of your deeds
Treasure your love and you'll be loved
Cherish the spirit and be strong

We in Alkaloid, trust in our creations,
treasure and cherish the force that sets
life in motion and builds perfect
harmony called HEALTH.



Health above all



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USJE Opens Doors to Ambitious Young People

About 30 people take part in USJE's internship program each year, from high schoolers to graduate students. In addition to acquiring skills and knowledge, they get experience the energy of teamwork in a socially responsible company.



The company has always contributed to the professional development of young people; its internship program has been running for six decades and many former interns became employees. The goal is to provide practical education and professional development to students, particularly from professions such as mechanical and electrical technicians, chemists and technologists. The company does this by giving them access to the technology, tools and equipment involved in the cement production process. USJE's leadership believes it is especially important that mechanical and electrical engineering students get the opportunity to experience in a real work environment under the guidance of experienced professionals.

“The internship in USJE showed me what it means to be part of a team,” - Bojan Kitanovski, Mechanical Technician

Kitanovski began working in USJE in 2005 as a young intern. Peer support and the transfer of knowledge and

experience served as a foundation for his professional development. Today, he is an USJE employee and team member.

“As a young unemployed person, I had a clear commitment to start working gain practical experience, something that was lacking from my traditional high school education. The internship at USJE in 2005 was a good opportunity for me to learn from senior colleagues and observe more complex machine operations and processes.

My first work experience was on cranes, which require a lot of concentration and specific skills successfully perform tasks in a safe way. My colleagues generously helped me master them. Without their support and daily advice through workflows, I would not have been able to overcome all challenges. In a company like USJE, no matter how dedicated one is to their work, if the team around them isn't working cohesively, results will suffer,” Kitanovski explains.

“My internship gave me a new outlook on life,” - Vlatko Sazdov, Mechanical Technician

Although Sazdov didn't know a lot about USJE, he decided to apply for internship. Today, he is employed in USJE and credits his internship for opening new opportunities.

“When I applied for the USJE internship in 2005, I didn't have great expectations since I didn't know enough about the company's profile and activities; I mainly just wanted to work and learn something new. My first engagement was at the gearbox flange, a malfunction of the transmission system. I worked under the guidance of my older colleagues to fix the problem. Looking back, I can say that this was a simple task, but at the time, it was a real challenge for me. My colleagues' support and trust helped me learn to correct defects, but also to take ownership of problems I encountered. The knowledge and experience they unselfishly shared with me made a big difference in my professional development, “ says Sazdov.

Bureaucratic, Inflexible Visa & Work, Residency Permits Process

Despite impressive efforts by Macedonian authorities to attract FDI over the years, the small number of expats who need to live and work in the country continue to face significant problems obtaining and maintaining work visas, work permits and residency permits. Despite some improvements to these processes, it still takes at least 2 months to process a work permit, visa and local residency permit.

This June, AmCham gathered detailed feedback from 11 international organizations in order to identify common issues and submit structured feedback to the relevant institutions. A summary of these findings follows.

Due to a lack of public investment in modern IT infrastructure to support modern and efficient processing of payments and applications, expats are frustrated by the need to:

- Submit many of the same hard copy documents to multiple ministries and agencies (MOI, MFA, ESA) with original signatures, stamps and court-approved translations, which is expensive and time-consuming;
- Re-complete and resubmit documents when they are lost or processing mistakes are made;
- Make time consuming trips to banks and maintenance of hard copy proof of payment;
- Make ID photo appointments within just 2 work days per week;
- Travel to third countries to apply for and pick up their Macedonian visa/permits, since the network of consulates is limited and use of electronic communications is rare;
- Resubmit much of the same documentation when renewing work and residency permit renewal application requirements; and
- Follow the same visa and work permit procedures for very short-term (<1 month) consultants.

Other complaints include:

- Having to produce a notarized lease agreement and prove health insurance coverage, as though employed expats are likely to seek local welfare benefits;

- The inability to obtain a visa for accompanying family members if their work contract last less than 1 year;
- The inability to obtain a visa for accompanying unwed partners; and
- Difficulties proving a legal connection between the local entity and the group, even when both entities have the same name.

In certain cases, visa and work/residency permits procedures are seen as non-transparent and unpredictable. For example,

- Detailed visa and work permit application requirements are not consistently published by all Macedonian consulates and consulate staff does not consistently advise applicants on proper completion of the application process;
- There is inconsistent treatment of cases by different officers and depending on the country of origin of the applicant, even when applying to work in the same organization;
- Some foreigners report lengthy wait times (e.g., 3-6 months) for the issuance of their first residency permit from MOI after arriving in country despite care-

AmCham gathered detailed feedback from 11 international organizations to identify common issues and submit structured feedback to the relevant institutions.

fully following MOI timelines and instructions. By law, residency permits must be issued within 25 days, however this does not always happen in practice, leaving some expats in an uncomfortable “grey zone”; and

- A number of expats report lengthy wait times for the renewal of their residency permit from MOI (e.g., 3 months) despite carefully following MOI renewal timelines and instructions.

New IP-related Customs Measures

Author: Darko Bajalski, PETOSEVIC Skopje

Macedonia's new Law on Customs Measures for Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) entered into force on June 5, 2015, bringing about the following changes:

- Right holders' representatives no longer have to obtain consent from offending declarants/importers before destruction of goods that infringe on IPRs. Now, Customs will notify the declarant/importer that their goods have been temporarily detained due to IPRs infringement, giving them 10 working days to oppose or consent to their destruction. Their failure to respond within that period will now be considered as tacit consent. Right holders' should only confirm the authenticity of the goods;
- The new law introduces the "small consignments procedure". Small consignments are defined as consignments containing up to three units and weighing up to 2 kg. If the right holder chooses to accept the "small consignments procedure", the Customs will detain suspicious small consignment *ex-officio* and inform the declarant/importer that the goods are considered as counterfeits and would therefore be destroyed. If the declarant/importer do not oppose the destruction within the 10-day period, the goods will be destroyed. The Customs would not ask for right holders' confirmation that the goods are counterfeit in the small consignments procedure.
- Right holders will now be given 4 working days (rather than 3) to file a Customs Watch Application (CWA) in case of an *ex-officio* detention. If this deadline is missed, the goods must be returned to their owner;
- Instead of filing separate Customs Watch Applications for each trademark, right holder representatives can now file one application that covers a variety of trademarks. NOTE: The bylaws necessary to implement this change are expected by August 4, 2015;
- The law states that CWAs can be granted for a maximum of one year, though in practice one year validity is the rule;
- "The Government" will now decide whether certain counterfeit goods (e.g., footwear and apparel) can be donated to needy groups and, if so, will cover donation-related costs. Right holder representatives only have to confirm that the offending images have been duly removed from the goods prior to their donation.

New Social Contributions Policy Goes Too Far

Starting this year, companies registered in Macedonia have to pay full income taxes and social insurance contributions on behalf of individual consultants who provide services to them, even for a single day. This policy is even applied to foreign consultants who don't live here, thus have no reason to hold local health and pension accounts. When compared with the VAT on services provided by companies (18%), this policy (amounting to 35% in taxes and insurance) discourages companies from engaging individual consultants – local or foreign – for any service whatsoever.

In contrast, in neighboring Albania, non-resident consultants aren't obliged to pay into social welfare systems.

Business – University Cooperation Breakfast

Our third annual gathering on business-university cooperation was held on June 23rd and included 70 guests from the business community, local private and state universities, state institutions and student organizations.



▲ Miroslav Marchev, AmCham Board President

“We are truly confident that the successful development of the university education is dependent on open communication and meaningful discussions between the government, the business sector and the universities,” said AmCham Board President, Miroslav Marchev during the opening.

U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia, Jess Baily, also helped opened the event by pointing out that current business-university cooperation in the United States still leaves room for improvement, despite its 120 year history. Thus, he underscored the importance of open dialogue on this theme, as well as a long term view of the process.



▲ Jess Baily, U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia

The roundtable discussion, moderated by AmCham Executive Director, Michelle Osmanli, touched on four main themes: internship programs, guest lecturers from the local business community, use of business cases and simulations in classrooms and laboratories and creation of specialized programs. She opened the discussion by pointing out that AmCham was proud to have many of the country’s most engaged companies as members. She said there were relatively few companies in the country that had invested in serious, long standing and deep cooperation programs, thus recognizing and encouraging their efforts was important.



Here are a few highlights from the discussion:

Computer science students in Macedonia generally don't struggle to find internship opportunities; instead, many students are attracted away from their studies by full-time job offers prior to graduation. Thus, internship practices in the computer science sphere are at a more advanced level than those in other sectors.

• Dr. Vlatko Stoilkov,
Vice-Rector for Teaching at SCMU

"The cooperation models foreseen by the Law on Higher Education are unrealistic and detract from more meaningful types of cooperation with the private sector. University "Boards for Cooperation for Cooperation and Confidence" should focus on involving the business community in curriculum development."

"Rather than hosting many students for 30 day internships, companies that offer scholarships to strong students and host them as repeat, short-term interns produce the best results."

• Dr. Dimitar Trajanov, Dean of Saints Cyril & Methodius University's (UKIM) Faculty of Information Sciences & Computer Engineering (FINKI)

"Our challenge is to meet the demand for interns from both SMEs and big, international companies active on the IT labor market."

"Internships are meant to accustom students to a specific company; it's not a good idea to try to standardize internship experiences across companies."

• Dean Mile Stankovski from UKIM's Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technologies (FEIT)

"Some companies are now seeking students for 6 month internships, which delay their graduation."

• FINKI's Vice Dean, Vladimir Trajkovic

"80% of our students plan to work abroad upon graduation."



• Dr. Atanas Kocov, Dean of UKIM's Faculty of Mechanical Engineering

"We have supported tailored training programs for new investors in the automotive sector. We also grant academic credit for some company programs, such as Wabtec MZT and ArcelorMittal."

"The lack of R&D cooperation between universities and businesses is the real problem. Such projects used to be supported by Ministry of Education & Science funds, but this program was cancelled to make way for the Government's Fund for Innovation and Technology Development, which is not yet awarding funds for these types of projects."

• Borka Petrovska,
Administration Manager at Feni Industries

"We view our internship program as a part of our corporate social responsibility to help develop young people in our local area, not a hiring tool. We would welcome more input from universities about internship learning objectives."

• Romela Popovik Trajkova, Head of Economic Policy, Structural Regulatory Reforms & Investments in the Cabinet of the Vice Prime Minister for Economic Affairs

"USAID's 'PRISMA' Project [2002] supported business-university cooperation on tailored, 'quick start' training - an excellent way of reducing students' theory-practice knowledge gap. The practice generally ceased when the project closed."

• Seavus' HR Manager, Olivera Gegovska

"We employ all possible tools – including a big internship program – to identify and recruit talented IT professionals."



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Our Members “Open a Door”

As part of its internship program “Open a Door”, on Thursday, May 21st, 2015 AmCham Macedonia invited the first group of 18 students to meet with representatives from 10 of its member companies. Longtime AmCham member company, Motiva’s MD Zoran Kostovski, kicked off the event by leading an interactive workshop on building mutual trust among team members within an organization. Students were then interviewed by HR professionals and learned more about a number of internship programs.

Some internship engagements were agreed upon on the spot and a total of 14 students were placed in internships via the program in the days and weeks that followed. AmCham continues to work on placing an additional 7 students within member organization in the coming months.



▲ Aleksandra Argir, Pivara Skopje



▲ Zoran Kostovski, Motiva

to Bright Young People

We would like to thank Pivara Skopje for donating the use of its training facilities for the gathering, as well as Motiva, for donating their time to lead the workshop at the event. Finally, we thank our members who took part in the first matchmaking event:

- Wabtec MZT Skopje
- Pivara Skopje,
- EVN Macedonia,
- Makedonski Telekom,
- OKTA,
- AMSM,
- ArcelorMittal Skopje,
- Philip Morris-TKP,
- ProCredit Bank, and
- Roche Macedonia.



AmCham's 2015 "Open a Door" Internship Program at a Glance

- Launched In April 2015;
- Targets students from low income households;
- 28 member organizations showed initially willingness to accept at least 1 intern via the program;
- 30 students and 3 high school students applied.

Challenges and lessons learned this year:

- Most companies are interested to engage students during the summer period, but most of the students preferred another season for a variety of reasons;
- Only a few companies offered internships outside of Skopje, while a number of students sought opportunities in Kicevo, Kocani, Stip, Tetovo;
- Recent high school graduates cannot be engaged as interns by law;
- Some students were not open to trying an internship outside their narrow study area;
- Companies are generally not interested in engaging high school student interns.

AmCham Connects Big FDI with Local Suppliers

For the second time, AmCham Macedonia gathered the domestic suppliers and foreign investors to discuss opportunities for future cooperation. On June 10th, we hosted procurement professionals from three member companies: *Arcelormittal Skopje*, *Feni Industries* and *Wabtec MZT* to clarify their procurement-related approaches, challenges and current needs.

Each speaker shared details on the products and services their company regularly buys from local suppliers, highlighting the positive impact they have had on local suppliers' quality standards and competitiveness. All three companies expressed a desire to increase cooperation with local suppliers; *Wabtec MZT's* Jadranka Pakic said her team was even putting on nationwide roadshows aimed at expanding their list of local partners.

Another common message was the necessity for local suppliers to understand and respond to the operational pressures that export-oriented companies face. Locally-supplied goods and services must be competitive in terms of cost, delivery terms and quality. Each procurement presentation included examples of local



▲ from left: Borka Petrovska and Lazar Trajkov, Feni Industries

suppliers that rose to the challenge of winning business with them, resulting in long term, mutually-beneficial cooperation.



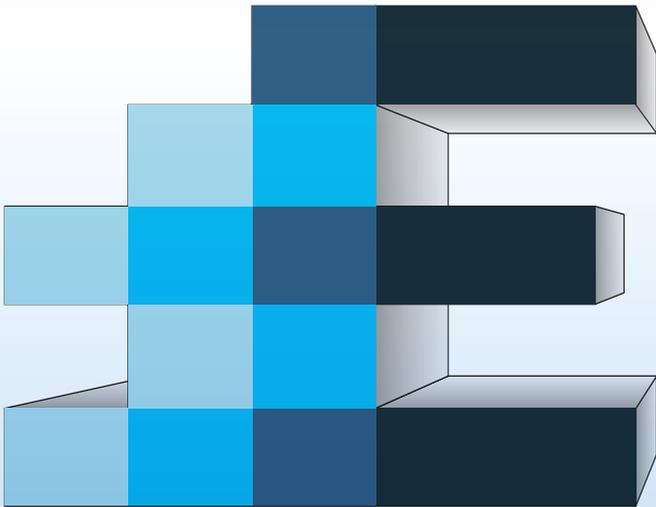
▲ from right: Jadranka Pakic, Wabtec MZT Skopje; Todorka Ristovska and Emilija Churevska, ArcelorMittal Skopje (CRM)



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Efficient Legal Risk Management Session with Karanovic & Nikolic

AmCham hosted its first member to member learning session on June 11th on the topic of Efficient Legal Risk Management. The session was led by Ljupka Noveska and Leonid Ristev, both Attorneys at Law at Karanovic & Nikolic.

Ms. Noveska started the session by introducing the challenge of efficiently managing legal risks and presented the results of Karanovic & Nikolic's regional research on this theme. Mr. Ristev spoke on the challenge of in-house councils balancing the need to manage everyday legal risks and unusual, perhaps more strategic or difficult legal challenges arising from legislative changes, lawsuits and the like. The group agreed that it was impossible for a small legal team to know everything, thus partnerships with subject matter experts were necessary. Throughout the session, the two presenters highlighted useful models and examples from their professional experience.

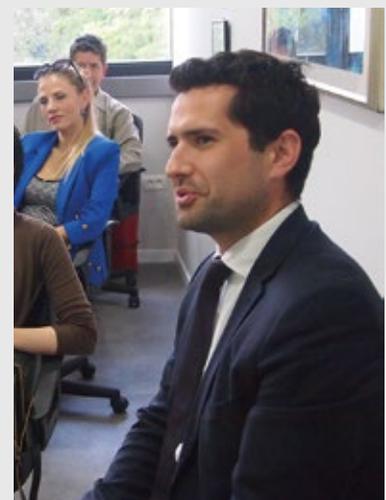
16 legal department representatives were actively engaged in the discussion and highly rated the event and its speakers.



▲ Ljupka Noveska, Attorney at Law, Karanovic & Nikolic

***Have something you'd like to share with fellow members?
Schedule your Member to Member learning session by
contacting the AmCham Executive Office!***

▼ Leonid Ristev, Attorney at Law,
Karanovic & Nikolic



Learning About Hidden Risks from Euroins



▲ Ralitsa Guberova, CEO

Our second member to member learning session was held on June 30th on “Hidden Risks from an Insurance Perspective”. Euroins Insurance Skopje’s CEO, Ralitsa Guberova, opened the session, while Maja Nonevska Hristovska, Direct Sales Manager, highlighted the top 10 insurance risks worldwide as well as in Macedonia. Hristovska also described where companies should look for hidden insurance risks, new business risks and to determine whether they are “underinsured”.

Attendees included representatives of the banking, food processing and consulting sectors as well as heavy industry. All benefitted from the practical examples shared by the Euroins team and gave the gathering high marks overall.



▲ Maja Nonevska Hristovska, Direct Sales Manager



Have something you’d like to share with fellow members? Schedule your Member to Member learning session by contacting the AmCham Executive Office!

Public Revenue Office Launches a Standing

At the request of AmCham Macedonia, Macedonia’s Public Revenue Office (PRO) began hosting regular meetings with a group of the largest and most active local and international business associations. The first meeting was held on June 30th at PRO headquarters and included representatives from 8 business organizations. PRO representatives at the first meeting included the Manager of the Tax Academy and Deputy Head General Inspector; 3 tax advisors; and the Manager of the Sector for Tax Payer and Tax Services.

This forum is meant to provide a consistent opportunity for business associations to pose questions, seek clarification, raise issues and suggest improvements to PRO’s work policies and practices on behalf of their members.

The first meeting featured extensive dialogue on PRO standard operating procedures with respect to inspections (e.g., advanced notification,) and what companies should do with they are not followed. Specific feedback shared by business representatives included:

- Small companies are more likely to be targeted with “ad hoc inspections”. More awareness raising is needed to prevent abuse;

Increasing Advocacy Cooperation with Other Chambers

AmCham has led a number of initiatives over the past year toward increasing its communication and cooperation on business advocacy initiatives with other business associations in Skopje. AmCham is open for cooperation on the business advocacy front, since we believe our interests generally align with other organizations, we all have limited resources and a coordinated approach would be more impactful. AmCham identifies advocacy priorities via our Board and committees to ensure that we focus our energy on policies that truly impact the overall economic environment in the country and impact many companies, big and small, local and foreign.

In late 2014, at the suggestion of a number of attendees at our corporate member meeting with 4 Ambassadors to Macedonia, AmCham organized a meeting of 7 international business organizations and economic diplomats from 5 embassies. The group agreed to increase information sharing on their advocacy efforts to identify cooperation opportunities.

Our Board President was also recently invited to join a Northwest Chamber initiative to agree on a set of business recommendations toward minimizing the economic impact of the country's current political crisis. While AmCham didn't ultimately join this initiative, we believe our input improved the final message and look forward to other opportunities to cooperate.

AmCham is open for cooperation on the business advocacy front, ...

Most recently, AmCham convinced the State Tax Authority to begin holding quarterly meetings with representatives of at least 10 local and international business interest associations. The first meeting was held in late June and provided a great opportunity for dialogue with this important institution on issues that impact the thousands of members these organizations jointly represent.

Business Association Forum

- Audit notifications do not always arrive on time and do not contain details that would help companies prepare (e.g., audit start date);
- Inspectors should differentiate between intentional and unintentional mistakes, saving fines for those errors where companies appear to be intentionally avoiding tax payments. Unintentional human error should result in instruction, timely correction and follow up, not punishment;
- Inspectors do not consistently take all relevant evidence into account when conducting an inspection. Issues should not appear in the final audit report that were not previously discussed with the company representative;
- It is virtually impossible to overturn an inspector's audit report. The lack of a functional appeal mechanism – for example, independent review by another inspector or panel of experts – leaves companies vulnerable to abuse.

The PRO representatives committed to incorporating these themes into future inspector training programs and proposed that a member of the Ministry of Finance's policy team be invited to future meetings in order to benefit from such feedback.

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Introductory Training on Transfer Pricing

As a follow up to KPMG Macedonia and AmCham's 2013-14 cooperation that produced a translation of the *OECD Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations*, members of our Legal and Tax Committee delivered a one day introductory transfer pricing training to tax inspectors. The May 15th event involved 23 inspectors from Public Revenue Office and the Ministry of Finance and featured the following speakers:

- Dusko Stevcevski, EY Skopje;
- Ivana Lekic, PricewaterhouseCoopers Skopje;
- Aleksy Damjanov, KPMG Macedonia; and
- Borce Smilevski, Deloitte Skopje.

The presentations offered insights on transfer pricing facts, how to apply the "arm's length" principle, regional approaches and perspectives, the transfer pricing methodology, examples of intra-company transactions and results from a developed comparative analysis. Event attendees actively participated in the session and highly rated their experience, pointing out that these types of trainings are crucial for them to gain new knowledge and strengthen their capacity to work in this area.

AmCham Macedonia would like to express special thanks to our volunteer trainers!



▲ Dusko Stevcevski, E&Y Skopje

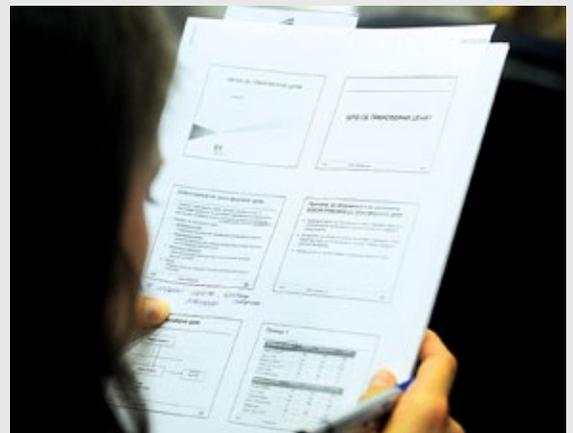


▲ Ivana Lekic, PricewaterhouseCoopers Skopje

▼ Borce Smilevski, Deloitte Skopje



▼ Aleksy Damjanov, KPMG Macedonia



AmCham Hosts U.S. IPR Enforcement Expert

This June, AmCham Macedonia welcomed Ms. Jennifer Blank, Attorney-Advisor on the Enforcement Team at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). Ms. Blank was in Skopje speak at a regional IP workshop for Customs and State Market Inspectorate officials organized by the State Department and USPTO. She met with AmCham members to learn more about the local IP environment from a business perspective as well as discuss ways in which USPTO programs could best support improvement of Macedonia's IP environment.

Participants shared challenges they had faced when attempting to protect their rights and all agreed that raising consumer awareness is critical for stopping piracy and one of the crucial elements in the fight against counterfeits. The group also discussed how U.S. right holders representatives are tackling the challenge

of online sales of counterfeits, since there have only been a few such cases in Macedonia.

Ms. Blank highlighted the importance of business community input toward improving coordination and cooperation between State institutions in this sphere. She said interested companies could also help law enforcers keep up with new technologies and continuously improve their work effectiveness and efficiency.

At USPTO, Ms. Blank is responsible for intellectual property policy, support of the development and maintenance of effective intellectual property regimes, and capacity building and technical assistance programs. She is focused on the enforcement of intellectual property rights, working closely with police entities, prosecution functions, border enforcement and the judiciary.



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 Makedonski Telekom, Inc. - Skopje
 Microsoft, Ltd.
 Okta Crude Refinery Oil, Inc.
 Pivara Skopje, Inc.
 SkopskiPazar, Inc.
 Visteon Electronics Macedonia, Ltd.
 Wabtec MZT, Inc.

CORPORATE

Alliance One Macedonia, Inc.
 Alvogen Pharma Macedonia, Ltd.
 ArcelorMittal Skopje (CRM), Inc.
 ASSECO SEE, Ltd.
 Avon Cosmetics, Ltd.
 Avto Moto Sojuz na Makedonija
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 CementarnicaUsje, Inc.
 CISCO Systems Macedonia, Ltd.
 Deloitte, LLC
 DHL Express Macedonia, Ltd.
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 Eurostandard Bank, Inc.
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 GD Granit, Inc.
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 MI-DA Grand Motors LLC
 Neocom, Inc.
 ONE Telecommunication Services,
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 Oracle East Central Europe
 Representative Office Skopje
 Philip Morris –Tutunski Kombinat
 Prilep, LLC
 PI Vitaminka, Inc. Prilep
 PricewaterhouseCoopers, Ltd.
 ProCredit Bank, Inc.
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NGO

Habitat for Humanity Macedonia
 Konekt
 LinkAcross - Skopje
 NORA - NGO for Rheumatism and
 Arthritis
 QSI International School of Skopje

 *New member

*It Takes a Village ...
continued from page 7*

Conclusions

Harnessing the power of internships is not easy for a small, SME-dominated economy like Macedonia. However, expanding internship opportunities for students and recent graduates would likely help combat the country's stubbornly high unemployment rate in a proactive and creative way. Without expansion of the practice, the continuous development of talented and ambitious young people is likely to be truncated, causing them to be overlooked by local employers and resulting in brain drain.

Fortunately, the increasing popularity of Macedonia as an FDI destination is breathing new life into the local labor market on the demand side. With the views and preferences of foreign companies already influencing the practices of local partners and the local labor market, more (and more meaningful) internship opportunities are appearing. Savvy local corporate leaders will want to be at the forefront of this transformation, lest they risk losing a competitive edge to more proactive players.

*Transitioning from Intern ...
continued from page 11*

Today I'm employed in Makedonski Telekom and my job includes taking part in various software development projects providing client-oriented solutions. I work on application development and upgrades, testing and support, as well as database system configuration and application migration. "T-home.mk" and "moj.telekom.mk" are among the well-known portals I've worked on.

Author: Irena Ivanovska, Specialist for Segment in the Chief Operating Officer Customer Area.

As a graduate student in Economics, the advertisement for interns without any previous work experience in one of the most profitable companies on our market, Makedonski Telekom, was very interesting. Very soon after applying, I was invited to join the team within the Chief Financial Officer Area. It sounded like an excellent opportunity and a place where I would be able to apply what I knew; and, that was really the case.

As a first-time intern it was a real challenge to fit within the day-to-day activities of such a developed company. But via teamwork, knowledge sharing within my team, a shared commitment, orientation and responsibility to meet goals, I was able to contribute.

The experience and knowledge that I gained during the 6-month internship helped me get a job on the staff of Channel Management immediately afterwards. Getting this job increased my motivation, responsibility and, of course, commitment to carrying out my new duties. A few years later, my desire for advancement, acquisition of new knowledge and expertise in other areas led to the next challenge and a new level in my career. I became part of the Marketing and Product Team of T-Mobile. This was an entirely new experience and a challenge that entailed assuming greater professional responsibilities and developing personally. I had to apply my knowledge of economics and finance more intensely, increase interaction with customers and – most importantly of all – meet their needs.

An internship was my first step in the right direction, giving me the opportunity to become part of the T family. The environment, experience, teamwork and exposure to a variety of functions all create a great opportunity for personal and career growth.



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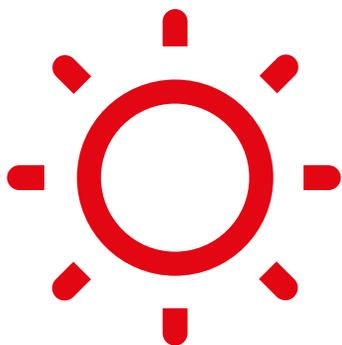
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