Naša kompanija pruža targetirane savjete malim i srednjim preduzećima, a sve u cilju unapređenja njihove konkurentnosti, pristupa finansijama ali i edukaciji koja je od suštinske važnosti za rast biznisa. U ovom smislu sarađujemo sa finansijskom industrijom u Crnoj Gori, a kroz nekoliko partnerskih kompanija pružamo i konkretne usluge finansiranja i osiguranja.

Pored ovih targetiranih usluga a u skladu sa Planom naučnoistraživačke djelatnosti važan segment u 2024. godini biće posvećen inovativnim projektima i unapređenju saradnje sa industrijom u kreiranju i implementaciji inovativnih aktivnosti. U ovom smislu napravljena su partnerstva sa prestižnim kompanijama iz sektora privrede, te se radi na pripremi projekata za inovativne kolaborativne šeme i pozive koje će objaviti Fond za inovacije i Ministarstvo prosvjete, nauke i inovacija – kazao je u intervjuu za Glasnik, mr **Ilija Mugoša**, direktor Sektora za istraživanja, Center for Finance.

Kako je nastala ideja za osnivanje Centre for Finance i koji su bili ključni motivatori?

I. Mugoša: Zadatak naše generacije jeste da damo doprinos održivom rastu i razvoju. Vjerujemo da najveći doprinos možemo dati kroz obrazovanje, nauku, istraživanje i inovacije. Olakšati pristup finansijama i unaprijediti finansijsku pismenost bila je ideja na kojoj je nastao Center for Finance. Na osnovnu ideju nadovezala se ambicija da proučavamo i istražujemo nove trendove u ekonomiji, finansijama, AI i njihovoj primjeni na poslovne procese u crnogorskoj ekonomiji. Šire posmatrano, Center for Finance osnovan je sa ciljem da pruži podršku pojedincima i mladim kompanijama da istražuju i inoviraju, kao i da ostvare svoje preduzetničke poduhvate.

Koje izazove i potrebe u oblasti ekonomije i finansija ste prepoznali kao osnov za formiranje ove organizacije?

I. Mugoša: Izazovi sa kojima se suočava Crna Gora nisu vezani za mandat jedne Vlade, već su dio šireg procesa koji je otvorio našu ekonomiju tokom proteklih godina, a posebno od obnove nezavisnosti. Revolucija u komunikacijama i tehnologiji smjestila je radna mjesta onamo gdje ima internet konekcije, primorala je zaposlene iz djelova Podgorice i Tivta da se takmiče za poslove sa ljudima iz Bostona i Pekinga, masovna proizvodnja prehrambenih proizvoda primorala je lokalne proizvođače iz Banjana i Bistrice da se takmiče sa velikim proizvođačima iz Sorije i Egera, slobodan protok kapitala naglasio je važnost stranih direktnih investicija za povećanje konkurentnosti, znanja i transfera tehnologija.

MR ILIJA MUGOŠA, DIREKTOR SEKTORA ZA ISTRAŽIVANJA, CENTER FOR FINANCE

ŽELIMO DA POSTANEMO PREPOZNATLJIV CENTAR IZVRSNOSTI U OBLASTI FINANSIJA

Center for finance vidimo kao dio inovacione i naučnoistraživačke zajednice koji će zajednički sa ostalim stejkholderima doprinositi održivom razvoju.

Upravo zbog ovoga u toj globalnoj trci za prosperitetom nikada nećemo uspjeti takmičeći se time što ćemo naše radnike plaćati manje, tako što ćemo graditi jeftinije ili proizvoditi proizvode nižeg kvaliteta. To nije naša konkurentska prednost. Ključ našeg uspjeha, kao što je to uvijek i bio, biće takmičenje u razvoju novih proizvoda (kroz nauku i razvoj), u stvaranju novih industrija i stvaranju ekosistema koji će njegovati naučna otkrića i tehnološke inovacije. Ovo je esencijalno za našu budućnost.

U ovom smislu istorija svijeta ali i Crne Gore je istorija napretka povezana sa nevjerovatnim inovacijama. Zapanjujuća je činjenica da je svjetska populacija u prvom desetljeću XXI vijeka proizvela veći output nego u prvih XIX vjekova zajedno. To je bio presedan u svjetskoj istoriji, po prvi put svaki aspekt ljudskog života, počevši od kulture, populacije, proizvodnje, prihoda doživjeli su renesansu (stabilan i dugoročan rast). Prema riječima ekonomskog nobelovca Roberta Lukasa "Po prvi put u istoriji, životni standard masa običnih ljudi je počeo održivo rasti...ništa slično ovome se nije dogodilo u ekonomskoj istoriji"[1]

Istina, ovakav razvoj i rast neravnomjerno je raspoređen širom svijeta, tako da i dalje postoje značajne ekonomske razlike između, ali i unutar, regiona i država. Čak i pored pojave ovakvog globalnog fenomena rasta, neke od zemalja Južne Amerike, Balkanskog dijela Evrope ali i Sub-Saharske Afrike nijesu doživjele ekonomski procvat. Većina zemalja u razvoju tada, ali i danas, pati od sporog i anemičnog rasta koji za sobom ostavlja značajne segmente populacije, a najčešće žene i mlade ljude.

Shvatajući da dosadašnji razvojni modeli nijesu dovoljno inkluzivni i održivi, te da ne promovišu u dovoljnoj mjeri važnost nauke i istraživanja posebno u dijelu saradnje sa industrijom, osnovan je Center for Finance kao naučnoistraživačka ustanova sa intencijom da zajedno sa najvažnijim činiocima društva postanemo prepoznatljiv centar izvrsnosti u oblasti finansija, unapređujući praktična i teorijska znanja koja oblikuju budućnost ekonomsko-finansijskog sektora.

Koje su najvažnije oblasti podrške koje organizacija pruža?

I. Mugoša: U skladu sa Programom naučnoistraživačke djelatnosti i kompetencijama tima koji čine eksperti iz akademske zajednice, naučnog, poslovnog i finansijskog sektora definisana su sljedeća četiri tematska prioriteta djelovanja.

TEMATSKI PRIORITETI DJELOVANJA

Ekonomska održivost i kreacija poslova. Makroekonomska i fiskalna održivost ključne su za održivi ekonomski razvoj. Ipak, taj dinamičan razvoj ne smije ostaviti nikoga zaboravljenim, upravo zato kreacija poslova predstavlja njegov važan dio. Center for Finance u ovom smislu ima ambiciju da istražuje politike i prakse koji mogu doprinijeti diverzifikaciji, ali i ekonomskoj održivosti lokalnih i državnih finansija. U ovom procesu analiziramo sve aspekte ekonomske održivosti, zelenu tranziciju i klimatske promjene.

Digitalizacija, Fintech, Ai i mašinsko učenje. Koristimo moć digitalizacije, mašinskog učenja i vještačke inteligencije da bismo pokrenuli inovacije, efikasnost i opipljiv uticaj. Posvećeni smo transformaciji industrije i poslovanja kroz najnovije tehnologije, njegovanju kulture cjeloživotnog učenja i doprinosu napretku društva.

Finansiranje za ekologiju i klimatske promjene. Zalažemo se za održivu budućnost tako što omogućavamo i mobilišemo inovativna rješenja za finansiranja posvećena ekologiji i klimatskim promjenama. Podstičemo pozitivan uticaj na životnu sredinu, podržavajući otpornost i tranziciju ka nisko karbonskoj ekonomiji otpornoj na klimatske promjene.

Edukacija i obrazovanje. Posvećeni smo osnaživanju pojedinaca i zajednice putem pristupačnog, inovativnog i kvalitetnog obrazovanja, sa posebnim fokusom na naše programe finansijske pismenosti. Predani smo kvalitetnom i inkluzivnom obrazovanju sa jasno definisanim vrijednostima i ciljevima.

Ko čini tim Centra for Finance i kako su članovi tima odabrani?

1 Lucas, Robert E., Jr. (2002). Lectures on Economic Growth, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. pp. 109–10.

I. Mugoša: Srž Centra za finansije čine ljudi. Naš tim sačinjen je od iskusnih profesionalaca sa dugogodišnjim iskustvom u javnoj upravi, međunarodnim organizacijama, akademskom i bankarskom sektoru. U našem radu promovišemo vrijednosti inovativnosti, saradnje, fokusa na rezultatima, integriteta i transparentnosti, trudeći se da svaka implementirana aktivnost dotakne onoga kome je i namijenjena.

Kako se organizacija angažuje u podršci malim i srednjim preduzećima i jačanju poslovnog ambijenta?

I. Mugoša: Center for Finance pruža targetirane savjete malim i srednjim preduzećima, a sve u cilju unapređenja njihove konkurentnosti, pristupa finansijama ali i edukaciji koja je od suštinske važnosti za rast biznisa. U ovom smislu sarađujemo sa finansijskom industrijom u Crnoj Gori, a kroz nekoliko partnerskih kompanija pružamo i konkretne usluge finansiranja i osiguranja.

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Od nedavno Center for Finance jedna je od institucija potpisnika Memoranduma o saradnji na implementaciji Programa razvoja finansijske edukacije u Crnoj Gori za period 2023-2027. godine, te ima intenciju da u saradnji sa najvažnijim činiocima društva radi na implementaciji svog Programa finansijske pismenosti koji nosi naziv "Finansijska pismenost za sve", a čija je misija da osnaži pojedince (djecu i starije) sa znanjem i vještinama neophodnim za donošenje informisanih finansijskih odluka i postizanje finansijskog blagostanja. Na ovom putu edukujemo, osnažujemo i inspirišemo pozitivnu promjenu u ličnom finansijskom ponašanju i stavovima, što ultimativno vodi do dugoročnog finansijskog napretka.

Valja napomenuti da okosnicu lokalnog ekonomskog razvoja čine ljudi i mala i srednja preduzeća te da je to resurs koji, čini mi se, nije u dovoljnoj mjeri iskorišten i stavljen u službu razvoja. Na liniji ovog razmišljanja Center for Finace ima namjeru da kroz edukaciju, jačanje kapaciteta, mentorsku podršku i omogućavanje pristupa finansijama radi na osnaživanju pojedinaca i malih i srednjih preduzeća. U skladu sa ovim zajedno sa partnerima radimo na uspostavljanju prvog crnogorskog Evropskog digitalnog inovacionog haba (EDIH) koji će zajedno sa još 228 ovakvih habova u Evropi biti na raspolaganju malim i srednjim preduzećima u njihovim naporima da transformišu svoje poslovanje korišćenjem vještačke inteligencije, mašinskog učenja, pristupa finansijama i digitalizacijom. Znači, kreiramo povoljan ambijent u kojem će svaki pojedinac ali i malo i srednje preduzeće moći da raste i razvija se na kvalitetniji način.

Kako će se implementirati Program podrške preduzetnicima, i kakve konkretne koristi preduzetnici mogu očekivati?

I. Mugoša: U cilju promovisanja inovacija, kreacija i preuzimanja rizika Center for Finance objavio je i Program podrške preduzetnicima. Intencija ovog Programa jeste da sve one koji imaju ideju osnažimo znanjem, resursima i mentorskom podrškom kako bi svoje inovativne ideje pretvorili u uspješne poslovne poduhvate. Pozivom preduzenici mogu dobiti mentorsku podršku u razvoju i plasmanu proizvoda, podršku u pristupu tržištu/kupcima, obuke iz domena finansija, registracije firmi, pristupa bankama i sredstvima kao i mogućnost dodjele beskamatnog finansiranja na iznos do 10.000 eura i ročnosti do godinu dana. Valja napomenuti da u ovom procesu Center for Finance koristi sopstvena sredstva i kapacitete i u partnerstvu sa kompanijom Financial Solution pruža i mogućnost dobijanja beskamatnog finansiranja.

Svi koji su zainteresovani za program mogu se prijaviti preko web portala www.kreditiranje.me te sve dodatne informacije mogu dobiti pozivom na broj telefona 067 167 305. Poziv je otvoren za sve i traje do 15.03.2024. godine.

Kako planirate sarađivati sa drugim organizacijama, kako iz Crne Gore, tako i izvan nje? Koje vrste partnerstava smatrate ključnim za postizanje ciljeva vaše organizacije?

I. Mugoša: Vođeni idejom da informacije vrijede jedino ukoliko se dijele nastojimo da izgradimo lokalna i međunarodna partnerstva koja će nam pomoći u ostvarenju ciljeva koji su zacrtani u našem Planu razvoja do 2028. godine. U ovom smislu radimo na jačanju naše vidljivosti u naučnoistraživačkoj zajednici kroz davanje stručnog doprinosa na konferencijama i projektima i ostvarenju ciljeva koji su zacrtani Strategijom pametne specijalizacije, Strategijom naučnoistraživačke djelatnosti do 2028. godine, Programom razvoja finansijske edukacije u Crnoj Gori do 2027. godine, kao i Strategijom regionalnog razvoja do 2027. godine.

Veoma važan aspekt ovog djelovanja u ostvarenju ciljeva jeste saradnja sa industrijom gdje su već ostvareni zapaženi rezultati u kreiranju nekoliko inovativnih projekata koji se odnose na primjenu vještačke inteligencije i mašinskog učenja u medicini, ali i finansijama. U narednom periodu radićemo na iznalaženju inovativnih rješenja za probleme sa kojima se većina malih i srednjih preduzeća suočavaju. Jedan takav problem jeste pristup finansijama gdje MSP imaju administrativne poteškoće, ali i nedovoljno znanja da na pravi način odgovore zahtjevima kreditora. U procesu smo kreiranja online alatke koja će omogućiti da mala i srednja preduzeća prije nego odu kod kreditora provjere svoju finansijsku potentnost i dobiju targetirani savjet na koji način da pristupe finansiranju. U ovom procesu se u velikoj mjeri oslanjamo na interne kapacitete tima imajući u vidu dugogodišnje bankarsko iskustvo većine članova tima.

Kakve dugoročne promjene i napredak očekujete da postignete kroz implementaciju svojih programa i inicijativa?

I. Mugoša: Vjerujemo da promjene polaze od nas samih. Takođe, da više malih inicijativa, ako se kontinuirano i dosljedno sprovode mogu da donesu rezultat i kvalitet. Zato smo posvećeni kontinuiranom unaprjeđenju sopstvenih znanja i vještina i primjenom dobrih poslovnih praksi. U širem kontekstu okvir djelovanja su ciljevi održivog razvoja, posebno: cilj 4 – kvalitetno obrazovanje, cilj 8 – dostojanstven rad i ekonomski rast, cilj 9 – industrija, inovacije i infrastruktura, cilj 10 – smanjenje nejednakosti, cilj 13 – očuvanje klime i cilja 17 – partnerstvom do cilja. U značajnoj mjeri naše aktivnosti naslanjaju se prioritete Evropskog zelenog sporazuma posebno u dijelu istraživanja i inovacija, finansija i regionalnog razvoja, klime i industrije.

Kako vidite budućnost Center for Finance i njegov doprinos društvu i ekonomiji Crne Gore?

I. Mugoša: Center for finance vidimo kao dio inovacione i naučnoistraživačke zajednice koji će zajednički sa ostalim stejkholderima doprinositi održivom razvoju. Važan segment na ovom putu imaće naše aktivnosti u tematskoj oblasti edukacije i obrazovanja kroz koje ćemo osnažiti pojedince, ali i mala i srednja preduzeća sa vještinama koje su im neophodne za donošenje informisanih finansijskih odluka.

U ovom trenutku smo u procesu kreiranja online alatke koja će pomoći malim i srednjim preduzećima u ocjeni kreditne sposobnosti, ali i pružiti im neophodan trening o osnovnim uslovima koje moraju zadovoljiti kako bi dobili finansijska sredstva, o načinu na koji se pametno zadužiti kod banaka te uskladiti zaduženje sa potrebama biznisa. U ovom procesu koristićemo pametne tehnologije i omogućiti samoocjenu (self assessment) kreditne sposobnosti.

Kroz dosadašnji rad primijetili smo da je nivo finansijske pismenosti, kako pojedinaca tako i malih i srednjih preduzeća na niskom nivou te da se trebaju jačati kapaciteti u tom smislu. Center for finance u procesu je razvoja aktivnosti finansijskog opismenjavanja, kako pojedinaca, tako i malih i srednjih preduzeća. U ovom smislu dizajniramo online, ali i face to face program finansijske pismenosti za djecu i odrasle koji će osnažiti pojedince i približiti im osnovne termine iz finansija.

Da li planirate proširenje tima ili saradnju sa drugim organizacijama u budućnosti?

I. Mugoša: Planirane ciljeve Center for finance ne može ostvariti samostalno i zbog toga težimo širiti našu mrežu saradnika, ali i institucija sa kojima razmjenjujemo praktična znanja, ekspertizu i resurse. U ovom smislu poseban fokus u 2024. godini biće saradnja sa naučno-istraživačkim institucijama u zemlji i inostranstvu, saradnja sa naučnicima i istraživačima, ali i saradnja sa predstavnicima industrije. Oni su ključni za ostvarenje naših ciljeva.

Center for finance želi da gradi i partnerstvo sa finansijskim institucijama posebno u dijelu razvoja i primjene inovativnih projekata u dijelu korišćenja vještačke inteligencije i mašinskog učenja u kreaciji prediktivnih modela ponašanja potrošača. Uvjereni smo da nove tehnologije mogu dati doprinos razvoju poslovanja, ne samo u sektoru finansija, već i u ostalim sektorima poput industrije, poljoprivrede, medicine ali i turizma. Pored ljudi i znanja, sve važniji resurs su podaci, koji ukoliko su strukturirani i obrađeni na pravi način mogu postati sjajna poluga za donosioce odluka, ali kompanije da svoje politike i ciljeve kreiraju na pametan način. Zato je važno osnažiti i dalje promovisati crnogorski sistem otvorenih podataka, koji će sa evropskim sistemom otvorenih podataka dati kvalitativnu bazu svim istraživačima da kreiraju pametne modele koji će omogućiti brži razvoj malih i srednjih preduzeća, ali i javne uprave. U ovom procesu veoma je važna promjena načina razmišljanja i shvatanja važnosti podataka koja, čini mi se, u Crnoj Gori još uvijek nije na odgovarajućem nivou. Upravo zbog ovoga svi činioci društva, na čelu sa predstavnicima naučnoistraživačke zajednice trebaju dati svoj doprinos u edukaciji i promociji savremenih tehnologija i konkretnih slučajeva (usecase) gdje se one mogu primijeniti.

MR ILIJA MUGOŠA, DIRECTOR OF THE RESEARCH SECTOR AT THE CENTER FOR FINANCE

WE AIM TO BECOME A RECOGNIZABLE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN THE FIELD OF FINANCE

We see the Center for Finance as part of the innovation and research community which, together with other stakeholders, will contribute to sustainable development.

Our company provides targeted advice to small and medium-sized enterprises, aiming to enhance their competitiveness, access to finance, and essential business education. Therefore, we cooperate with the financial industry in Montenegro and provide specific financing and insurance services in cooperation with several partner companies.

In addition to these targeted services and in line with the Scientific and Research Activity Plan, an important segment in 2024 will be dedicated to innovative projects and enhancing cooperation with the industry in creating and implementing innovative activities. Therefore, we established partnerships with prestigious companies in the business sector, and have been preparing projects for innovative collaborative schemes and calls to be announced by the Innovation Fund and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation, says in the interview for Glasnik mr **Ilija Mugoša**, Director of the Research Sector at the Center for Finance.

How did you come up with an idea to establish the Centre for Finance, and what were the key motives?

I. Mugoša: The task of our generation is to contribute to sustainable growth and development. We believe that the greatest contribution we can make is through education, science, research, and innovation. Facilitating access to finance and improving financial literacy was the idea behind the establishment of the Center for Finance. The main idea was complemented by the ambition to study and explore new trends in economy, finance, AI, and their application to business processes in the Montenegrin economy. Broadly speaking, the Centre for Finance was founded with the aim of supporting individuals and young companies to explore and innovate, as well as to realize their entrepreneurial endeavours.

What challenges and needs in the field of economy and finance did you identify as the basis for establishing this organization?

I. Mugoša: The challenges that Montenegro is facing are not related to the mandate of one government, but are part of a broader process which has opened up our economy over the past years, especially since the restoration of independence. The revolution in communications and technology has placed jobs where there is internet connectivity, forcing employees from Podgorica and Tivat to compete for jobs with people from Boston and Beijing. Mass production of food products has forced local producers from Banjani and Bistrica to compete with large producers from Sorija and Eger. The free flow of capital has emphasized the importance of foreign direct investments in increasing competitiveness, knowledge, and technology transfer.

This is the reason why we will never succeed in the global race for prosperity by competing in paying our workers less, building cheaper, or producing lower-quality products. That is not our competitive advantage. The key to our success, as it has always been, will be competing in the development of new products (through science and research), in creating new industries, and an ecosystem, which fosters scientific discoveries and technological innovations. This is essential for our future.

In this sense, the history of both, the world and Montenegro, is a history of progress linked to incredible innovations. It is astonishing that the world's population produced more output in the first decade of the 21st century than in the first XIX centuries together. This was unprecedented in the world history; for the first time, every aspect of human life, from culture, population, production, income, experienced a renaissance (stable and long-term growth). According to the Nobel laureate in economy Robert Lucas "For the first time in history, the living standards of the masses of ordinary people have begun to undergo sustained growth…. Nothing remotely like this economic behaviour has happened before".[1]

This is true. Such development and growth are unevenly distributed worldwide, so significant economic disparities exist between, and within, regions and countries. Even with the emergence of such a global phenomenon of growth, some countries in South America, the Balkans, and Sub-Saharan Africa have not experienced economic prosperity. Most developing countries then, as well as today, have suffered slow and anemic growth, which leaves significant segments of the population behind, often women and young people.

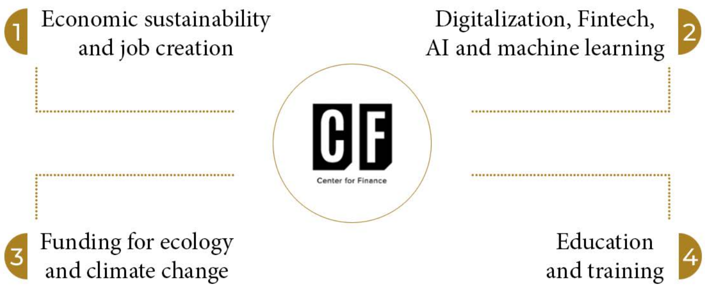
Understanding the insufficient inclusiveness and sustainability of previous development models and their inadequate promotion of the importance of science and research, especially in terms of cooperation with industry, the Center for Finance was established as a scientific and research institution. Its aim is to become a recognizable center of excellence in the field of finance, together with the most important social actors, by enhancing practical and theoretical knowledge which shapes the future of the economic and financial sector.

What are the most important areas of support provided by the organization?

1 Lucas, Robert E., Jr. (2002). Lectures on Economic Growth, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. pp. 109–10.

I. Mugoša: In line with the Scientific and Research Activity Program and the competencies of the team made up of experts from the academic community, scientific, business, and financial sectors, the following four thematic priorities of action.

THEMATIC PRIORITIES OF ACTION



Economic sustainability and job creation: Macroeconomic and fiscal sustainability are of key importance for the sustainable economic growth. However, dynamic development must not leave anyone behind; therefore job creation represents its important segment. In this sense, the Center for Finance has the ambition to explore policies and practices, which can contribute to diversification as well as the economic sustainability of local and state finances. In this process, we analyze all aspects of economic sustainability, green transition, and climate change.

Digitization, Fintech, AI, and machine learning: We use the power of digitization, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to drive innovation, efficiency, and tangible impact. We are dedicated to transforming the industry and business through the latest technologies, fostering a culture of lifelong learning, and contributing to social progress.

Funding for ecology and climate change: We advocate for a sustainable future by enabling and mobilizing innovative finance solutions dedicated to ecology and climate change. We encourage a positive impact on the environment, supporting resilience, and transition towards a low-carbon economy resilient to climate changes.

Education and training: We are committed to empowering individuals and communities through accessible, innovative, and quality education, with a particular focus on our financial literacy programs. We are dedicated to quality and inclusive education with clearly defined values and goals.

Who makes up the team of the Center for Finance and how did you make up the team?

I. Mugoša: Its people make the core of the Center for Finance. Our team consists of experienced professionals with years of experience in public administration, international organizations, academia, and the banking sector. In our work, we promote values of innovation, cooperation, results-focus, integrity, and transparency, striving to ensure that every implemented activity affects those whom it was intended to.

How does the organization engage in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and strengthening the business environment?

I. Mugoša: The Center for Finance provides targeted advices to small and medium-sized enterprises, aimed at enhancing their competitiveness, access to finance, and education essential for business growth. In this regard, we cooperate with the financial sector in Montenegro, and we also provide concrete financing and insurance services in cooperation with several partner companies.

In addition to these targeted services and in line with the Scientific and Research Activity Plan, an important segment in 2024 will be dedicated to innovative projects and enhancing cooperation with the industry in creating and implementing innovative activities. In this regard, partnerships have been established with prestigious companies in the business sector, and we have been preparing projects for innovative collaborative schemes and calls to be announced by the Innovation Fund and the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation.

In the coming period, our goal as a scientific and research institution is to be recognized as a center of excellence not only in finance sector, but also as a reliable partner in implementing innovation policies and projects at the local and international levels.

Recently, the Center for Finance became one of the institutions signatories of the Memorandum of Cooperation for the implementation of the Financial Education Development Program in Montenegro for the period 2023-2027. Our intention is to cooperate with the key stakeholders to implement our Financial Literacy Program called "Financial Literacy for All which aims to empower individuals (children and adults) with the knowledge and skills necessary to make information-built financial decisions and achieve financial well-being. In this process, we educate, empower, and inspire positive change in personal financial behaviour and attitudes, ultimately leading to long-term financial progress.

It is worth noting that the backbone of local economic development consists of people and small and medium-sized enterprises, a resource which seems to remain underutilized and underexploited for the purposes of development. In this regard, the Center for Finance intends to empower individuals and small and medium-sized enterprises through education, capacity building, mentorship support and access to finance. Therefore, we are working with partners to establish the first Montenegrin European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH), which, along with 228 such hubs in Europe, will be available to small and medium-sized enterprises in their efforts to transform their businesses using artificial intelligence, machine learning, access to finance and digitization. Thus, we are creating a favourable environment in which every individual and small and medium-sized enterprise can grow and develop in a more quality way.

How will the Entrepreneur Support Program be implemented, and what specific benefits can entrepreneurs expect?

I. Mugoša: In order to promote innovation, creation, and risk-taking, the Center for Finance has also launched the Entrepreneur Support Program. The intention of this program is to empower individuals, who have ideas, with knowledge, resources, and mentorship support to turn their innovative ideas into successful business ventures. Through the program, entrepreneurs can receive mentorship support in product development and placement, access to markets/customers, training in finance, company registration, access to banks and funds, as well as the possibility of receiving interest-free financing of up to EUR 10,000 with a maturity of up to one year. It is worth noting that in this process, the Center for Finance uses its own funds and capacities and, in partnership with Financial Solution company, provides the opportunity to obtain interest-free financing.

All those interested in the program can apply through the web portal www.kreditiranje.me, and additional information can be obtained by calling 067 167 305. The call is open to everyone and lasts until March 15, 2024.

How do you plan to cooperate with other organizations, both from Montenegro and beyond? What types of partnerships do you consider crucial for achieving your organization's goals?

I. Mugoša: Guided by the idea that information is valuable only when shared, we strive to build local and international partnerships which will help us achieve the goals outlined in our Development Plan until 2028. In this regard, we work on strengthening our visibility in the scientific and research community by providing expert contributions to conferences and projects and achieving the goals outlined in the Smart Specialization Strategy, Scientific and Research Strategy until 2028, the Financial Education Development Program in Montenegro until 2027, as well as the Regional Development Strategy until 2027.

A very important aspect of achieving goals is cooperation with the industry, where significant results have already been achieved in creating several innovative projects related to the application of artificial intelligence and machine learning in medicine and finance. In the coming period, we will work on finding innovative solutions to the problems most small and medium-sized enterprises face. One such problem is access to finance, where SMEs face administrative difficulties and lack sufficient knowledge to respond to creditor requirements adequately. We are in the process of creating an online tool, which will enable small and medium-sized enterprises to assess their financial potential and receive targeted advice on how to approach financing before going to creditors. In this process, we largely rely on the internal capacities of the team, considering the long-standing banking experience of most team members.

What long-term changes and progress do you expect to achieve through the implementation of your programs and initiatives?

I. Mugoša: We believe that change starts from within ourselves. Moreover, we believe that numerous small initiatives, if consistently and continuously implemented, can yield significant results and quality. Therefore, we are committed to continuously improving our own knowledge and skills and applying best business practices. In a broader context, the framework of our activities includes the Sustainable Development Goals, especially: Goal 4 – Quality Education, Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, Goal 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities, Goal 13 – Climate Action, and Goal 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. To a significant extent, our activities align with the priorities of the European Green Deal, especially in the areas of research and innovation, finance, regional development, climate, and industry.

How do you perceive the future of the Center for Finance and its contribution to Montenegro's society and economy?

I. Mugoša: We see the Center for Finance as part of the innovation and scientific and research community, which will together with other stakeholders contribute to sustainable development. An important aspect of this process will be our activities in the thematic area of education and training, through which we will empower individuals as well as small and medium-sized enterprises with the skills necessary to make informed financial decisions.

Currently, we are in the process of developing an online tool which will help small and medium-sized enterprises assess their creditworthiness and provide them with necessary training on the basic requirements they must meet to obtain financial resources, on the ways to borrow smartly from banks, and align borrowing with business needs. In this process, we will utilize smart technologies and enable self-assessment of creditworthiness.

Through our previous work, we have noticed the low level of financial literacy, both among individuals and small and medium-sized enterprises and that there is need to strengthen the capacities in this regard. The Center for Finance is in the process of developing financial literacy activities for both in-

dividuals and small and medium-sized enterprises. In this sense, we are designing online as well as face-to-face financial literacy programs for children and adults which will empower individuals and familiarize them with basic financial terms.

Do you plan to expand the team or cooperate with other organizations in the future?

I. Mugoša: The planned goals of the Center for Finance cannot be achieved independently, and therefore, we aim to expand our network of associates and institutions to exchange practical knowledge, expertise, and resources. In this regard, a special focus in 2024 will be on cooperation with scientific and research institutions in the country and abroad, cooperation with scientists and researchers, as well as industry representatives. They are crucial for achieving our goals.

The Center for Finance aims to build partnerships with financial institutions, especially in terms of the development and implementation of innovative projects, use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in creating predictive consumer behaviour models. We are convinced that new technologies can contribute to business development not only in the financial sector, but also in other sectors such as industry, agriculture, medicine, and tourism.

In addition to people and knowledge, data is an increasingly important resource. If structured and processed correctly, data can become a powerful lever for decision-makers and companies to create their policies and goals intelligently. Therefore, it is important to strengthen and further promote the Montenegrin open data system, which, together with the European open data system, will provide a qualitative basis for all researchers to create smart models, which will enable faster development of small and medium-sized enterprises as well as public administration.

In this process, a change in mindset and understanding the importance of data is crucial, which, it seems to me, is still not at an appropriate level in Montenegro. Therefore, all stakeholders in society, led by representatives of the scientific and research community, should contribute to the education and promotion of modern technologies and specific use cases, where they can be applied.