## INTERVIEW: UWE CIRBES, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF GCI UNIT, BALKAN INVESTMENT EXPERT

# THE BALKANS LIKE A MAGNET FOR FOREIGN INVESTORS

Serbia has been at the top of the world for several years when it comes to attracting foreign direct investment. Our intense and persistent efforts to seek investors, global marketing and faith in Balkan countries such as Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Northern Macedonia have proven to be very successful, according to Uve Cirbes, Chairman of the Board of GCI UNIT.

This German by origin, who in the opinion of his clients is known as a real "magnet" for attracting foreign direct investment, stresses in an interview for our magazine that he will not overdo it if he says that Serbia is, on many issues, developing even faster than its native Germany. Many people will wonder whence in Serbia because many of the investors go West.

-I came to Belgrade for the first time in 2016 and was impressed with the city's beauty, as well as the people who live together, regardless of their different nationalities. If it wasn't for a special reason, and I'll explain to you, I probably would never have come to Belgrade because of negative prejudices and bad marketing about your country. But everything I heard through the media, everything that was written and said about this country over the years, everything negative, in the very short term, was completely transformed into a positive one. You need to see and experience the Balkans, especially Belgrade, Podgorica, Tirana and Skopje before you say anything about them.

#### That picture has now changed, as you say. When foreigners ask you about our region today, what do you tell them?

-Today, after three years of intensive work, I can confirm that in my opinion, as an internationally experienced businessman, who has already seen and met almost the whole world, this is a perfect place to live and invest, which is confirmed by many of my clients as direct investors. After only a few weeks of staying here, I knew this and informed my entire network of business people I work with. Also,

Many of my colleagues and friends thought I was crazy, and people I talked to in Serbia asked me what I was doing here. Why did you come from Dubai to Serbia? Everybody wants to leave Serbia, and I'm coming here?!

#### So, the next question is obvious - what are you doing here?

As a businessman and a manager, I see things differently, and I find solutions easier because I am beyond that, and I look at things from the other side and more realistically. It is as if an experienced manager, an expert, would appear at some point when a company had no other way out and a different angle was needed to find a solution. If one's resources in a country are not sufficient to please the needs of citizens, they are required other managers, companies, top people who build something in their own country, who need to set up companies to find young talents and people to do a job, are needed. And that's what I've been doing all my life. With my then-just-established company, I helped more than 17,000 top managers and companies find a new challenge, thus freeing companies from their problems. And all over the world. For the past 26 years, I have built a network of corporations, large and medium-sized companies in China, the UAE, Asia and, of course, Europe. And through that collaboration, I gained insight into different cultures and mentalities. Of course, some people in Serbia were still dissatisfied with the situation in the country, they wanted to emigrate to Germany and other countries. But now I'm sure everyone will be back. Please don't get me wrong, I have nothing to do with politics, I don't want to have anything to do with politics and I certainly can't afford a professional judgment, but that is what my managerial experience tells me. I consider myself a neutral outsider, an open-minded businessman, and from my many years of global experience, I can say that Serbia has developed far better in the short term after communism, a time of corruption and war than any other country I know. If one wants to compare himself to Germany, then he must also account for the time that Germany needed after the war. Serbia has



- No, I'll go one step further. I can say that it is already predictable today that Germany is steeply descending, and Serbia will increasingly be attractive to foreign investors. Germany has 20 times more

I have conducted marketing worldwide - in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. At first, in the first two years, it was very difficult, because almost nobody knew where Serbia is. Many still thought it is in Africa and compared it to Zambia. My enlightenment work, let's call it that way, starting from scratch with many people.

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achieved this in half the time.

One would say that you are now exaggerating comparing Serbia and Germany.

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BALKAN KAO MAGNET ZA STRANE INVESTICIJE Sebe smatram neutralnim autsajderom, biznismenom otvorenih očiju i iz svog Sebe smatram neutralnim autsajderom, oznašnem da se Srbija razvila daleko bolje u dugogodišnjeg globalnog iskustva mogu da kažem da se Srbija razvila daleko bolje u dugogodišnjeg globalnog iskustva mogu ua kazerneje i rata, nego bilo koja druga držag kratkom roku nakon komunizma, vremena korupcije i rata, nego bilo koja druga držag kratkom roku nakon komunizina, vremeno ko ekonomiju Uve Cirbes, predsednik koju znam – konstatuje u razgovoru za Srpsku ekonomiju Uve Cirbes, predsednik

i prijatelji smatrali su da sam lud, a ljudi s kojima sam razgovarao u Srbiji pitali su me šta ja to radim ovde. Zašto iz Dubaija u Srbiju? Svi žele da odu iz Srbije, a ja dolazim tu ljanstvo vaše zemlje, tako da ne moraju

Mnoge moje kolege

ostajati ovde samo 60 dana poput turista već mogu izgraditi svoj posao i razvijati ga. Mislim da je to dobra ideja i u ovom momentu trebalo bi da kažem da je to moja ideja. Predstavio sam taj predlog Vladi Srbije, ali i vladama Crne Gore, Albanije i Severne Makedonije. Nažalost, do danas takav zakon o državljanstvu koje bi se dobijalo investiranjem još nije donet osim u Crnoj Gori.

Każete da ste predstavili svoje ideje u zemljama regiona. Kakvi su rezultati? - Posebno u Srbiji i Severnoj Makedoniji, kao i u Crnoj Gori, bio sam u prilici da predstavim investitore vladama i da te balkanske zemlje reklamiram širom sveta, ŝto sam oĉigledno dobro uradio. A upravo je to moj cilj - želim da se pobrinem za to i da svojim uticajem i poslovnom mrežom pomognem da bar 20.000 ljudi dobije nova radna mesta. Ne želim da dovedem stotine, več mnogo više kompanija i Balkan tako učinim jačim nego

Svaka osoba treba da ima razlog zbog kojeg živi na ovoj planeti. Svi smo mi bili pobednici na početku, ali se meri ono sto ostavimo iza sebe. Ja želim da ostavim ovaj svet boljim nego što sam ga zatekao, želim da napravim razliku. A lz ličnog iskustva znam da možete mnogo da postignete ako verujete u svoje ciljeve t radite na njihovom ostvarivanju. Želim da mladi veruju u sebe i svoju Srbiju, kao što to rade investitori i menadžeri koji dolaze sa strane.

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companies escaping annually, while Serbia has companies coming The media doesn't even report on it. The people who invest in Serbia today, who stay there and those who develop and invest their

> inventions and ideas here, will be the winners. Everyone else will return to Serbia. And if some significant people bring some benefits to the state of Serbia and if they in any way fulfill the criteria under Article 19 of the Law on Citizenship, then they can also obtain the citizenship of your country, so they do not have to stay in the country for only 60 days like tourists, and they can already build their business, and grow it. I think it's a good idea and at this point, I should say it's my idea. I presented the proposal to the Government of Serbia, as well as the governments of Montenegro, Albania and Northern Macedonia. Unfortunately, to date, such a citizenship law that would be obtained by investing has not yet been adopted, except in Montenegro.

### You say that you have presented your ideas in the countries of the region. What are the results?

-Especially in countries like Serbia and Northern Macedonia, as well as in Montenegro, I have been able to introduce investors to governments and to advertise these Balkan countries around the world, which I have done well. And that's exactly my goal - I want to take care of that and help with my influence and business network to get at least 20,000 people new jobs. I do not want to bring hundreds, but many more companies to the Balkans, making the Balkans stronger than ever. Every person should have a reason why he lives on this planet. We were all winners in the beginning, but we measure what we leave behind. I want to leave this world better than I found it; I want to make a difference. And I know from personal experience that you can achieve a lot if you believe in your goals and work to achieve them. I want young people to believe in themselves and their Serbia, as do investors and managers who come from the outside.

Srbija je seč nekaliko godina u svetskom vrhu po privlačenju direktnih stranih investicija. Naš intenzivan i

uporan rad na traženju investitora, globalni marketing i vera u balkanske zemlie poput Srbije, Crme Gore, Albanije I Severne Makedonije na kraju su se dokazali kao veoma uspešni - tvrdi Uve Cirbes, predsednik Upravnog odbora kompanije GCI UNIT.

pise: Dragan Stevanović

Ovaj Nemac koji, prema mišljenju njegovih klijenata, slovi za pravi magnet za privlačenje direktnih stranih investicija, naglašava u razguvoru za Srpsku ekonomiju da nece preterati ako każe da se Stbija danas, po mnogo čemu, razvija čak i brže nego njegova rodna Nemučka. Mnogi ce se, medutim, kako primećuje, zapitati otkud on u Srbiji kada mnogi iz nje odlaze upravo na Zapad.

- Dolao sam u Beograd prvi pot 2016. godine i bio sam impresioniran lepotama ci. U početku, u prve dve godine, bilo grada, kao i ljudima koji tu žive zajedno, bez obzira na različite nacionalnosti. Da nije postojao specijalan razlog, a objanicu sam i knji, venwatno nikad ne hih dosao u Beograd zbog predrasutla i lošeg madaetinga o vašoj zemlji. Ali sve što sam cuo u medijima, sve sto je napisano l rečeno o ovoj zemlji tokora godina, sve ono negativno, u vrlo kratkom roku potpuno

je promenjeno u poz dite i iskusite Balkan Podgoricu, Tiranu i Bta każęte o njima.

Upravnog odbora GCI UNIT, ekspert za investicije na Balkanu

Ta slika se sadi promenila, Kada va stavljaju pitanja e im kazete? Danas, nakam

rada, mogu da pe rodno iskusni biznismen kon je i upoznao skoro ceo suet, da je ovo sa-

vršeno mesto za život i investiranje, što dokazuje i veliki broj mojih klijenata kao direktnih investitora. Posle samo nekoliko nedelja boravka ovde to sam znao Lo tome obavestio svoju kompletnu mrežu poslovnih ljudi s kojima saradojem. Osim toga, vodio sam marketing širom saeta, u Aziji, na Bliskom istoku, u Evropi i Afrije veonu teško jer skoro niko nije znao gde je Srbija. Mnogi su i dalje mislili da je to u Africi i uporedicali su je sa Zambijom. Moj prosvetiteljski rad, da ga tako nazosemo, kod mnogih ljudi je počeo od mile. Mnoge moje kolege i prijatelji sma-

trali su da sam lud, a ljusli s kojima sam

rargovaran u Srhiji pitali su me šta ja tri

radim ovde. Zašto iz Dubnija u Srbiju? Svi

SRPSKA EKONOMI tveni resursi u

da bi se zadovoljile potrebe gradra p u različite kulture i mentalitete. Naravno Zahwaljujući (0) Sata trebni su i drugi menadžeri, korga vrhunski ljudi koji nešto grade = = zemlji, koji bi osnovali kompanir la bi mladi talenti i ljudi našli posa la ono sto ja radim celog života Saren tada tek osnovanom kompanjun pr

Želim da svojim uticajem i poslovnom mrežom pomognem dt bar 20.000 ljudi dobje nova radna mesta

tvrdim da je danas pojedini ljudi u Srbiji još su bili nezadovoljni stanjem u državi, želeli su da emigriraju u Nemačku i druge zemlje. Ali sad sam siguran da ce se svi vratiti. Molim vas. nemojte me pogrešno shvatiti, ja nemam nikakve veze s politikom, ne želim ni da imam veze s njom i sigurno ne mogu sebi da dozvolim profesionalnu procema, ali to mi govori moje menadžersko iskustvo. Sebe smatram neutralnim autsajderom, biznismenom otvorenih odiju i iz svog dugogodišnjeg globalnog skustva mogu da kažem da se Srbija razella daleko bolje u kratkom roku nakon komunizma, vremena korupcije i rata,

se Nemačka strmoglavo spušta, a Sroija če sve više biti atraktivna za strane investitore. Nemačka ima 20 puta više kompanija koje godišnje pobegnu, dok Srbija Ima kompanije koje dolaze. Mediji o tome i ne izveštavaju. Ljudi koji danas ulažu u Srbiju, koji ostanu tu i oni koji razvijaju i ulažu ovde svoje izume i ideje, biće pobednici. Svi drugi će se vratiti u Srbiju. A ako pojedini značajni ljudi donesu neki benefit državi Srbiji i ako na bilo koji način ispunjavaju kriterijume po osnovu člana 19 Zakona o dodeli državljanstva, onda mogu da dobiju i držav-

Ikada do sada.

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