



# Townhall Košice

**INTERACTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS  
SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BUSINESSES  
ADAPTIVE ACADEMIA**

**As a part of its long-term focus on regional development, AmCham introduced a new event format - Townhall Košice. Its main ambition is to focus on the opportunities in the Košice region, look for synergies and strengthen the connection and cooperation between the city, its citizens, the business sphere, academia.**

The event was opened by Gabriel Galgoci, President of AmCham Slovakia, who stressed the importance of two main pillars of regional development - local innovation initiatives and creating an ecosystem for talent development.

The opening address was delivered by Rastislav Trnka, Chairman of Košice Self-Governing Region, who introduced the Regional Innovation Strategy for the following decade. Inspired by the South Moravian Innovation Centre and its contribution to the transformation of Brno, the Košice Region Innovation Center should integrate various activities related to innovation in the region.

Representing academia, Pavol Sovák, Rector, University of P.J. Šafárik, was the next to speak. He mentioned the fourth industrial revolution and his belief that Košice is well positioned to use the resulting opportunities. He talked about the Cassovia New Industry Cluster, another key piece in the effort to create a new industry through effective collaboration. He finished by inviting everyone interested to take part and support this unique and ambitious project that could change Košice dramatically.

He was followed by Michal Hladký, Director of Creative Industry Košice, who talked about the Košice 2.0 project, which was selected as one of eleven projects under the EU initiative Urban Innovative Actions aiming to find innovative solutions to urban challenges. The main goal

of Košice 2.0 is to improve the quality of life in the city through a creative ecosystem involving the local government, businesses and the citizens. To find out more, check out the article on page 13.

**We are trying to create a space where all the potential from the Košice region could unite and thus form a new innovation industry, affecting various sectors of the economy. It would generate increased GDP, new jobs and a higher quality of life.**

RASTISLAV TRNKA,  
Chairman of  
Košice Self –  
Governing  
Region



František Jakab, Director, University Science Park TECHNICOM (Technical University of Košice) has been a long-term advocate of digital innovation and one of the leading figures connecting business with academia in the Košice region. He introduced ECDI CASSOVIUM, a shared project backed up by two universities (TUKE, UPJŠ) and the Košice IT Valley cluster, which has a chance to be among the European Digital Innovation Hubs supported under EU's Digital Europe program.

All of these projects are reflected in the Regional innovation strategy of the Košice Self-Governing Region 2021-2030, introduced by Julianna Orbán Máté, Director, Via Carpatia EGTC. Ms. Orbán Máté talked about the Košice Region Innovation Center, which should serve as an umbrella organization for all these initiatives, aligning the overall strategy with the requirements and available opportunities of the EU. The strategy reflects the goal to strengthen the cooperation between the self-governing region and the business sector, the public and non-profit sector, and the universities and research labs.

All of the speakers introducing the individual projects returned to the stage for a brief discussion with Martin Mudrák, Director of AmCham's Košice office, to talk about how these projects combine into a meaningful whole benefitting the regional innovation ecosystem and using the multiplied strengths of the involved stakeholders.

Pavol Sovák stressed the importance of working together to achieve a common goal. His vision is to offer innovators from various industries top quality collaboration as well as the opportunity to use the university labs and equipment to test their ideas and products. Although the goals of these initiatives seem very ambitious, the involved stakeholders understand that in order to make them work they need to work together.

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František Jakab pointed out that one of the reasons why Košice hasn't been able to attract innovative investments in such a degree as other cities in the region in Hungary or Poland is the inability to offer additional support, for example in the form of tax relief.

**Our main goal is to keep especially the young people in the region. Otherwise they bring their added value somewhere else.**

JULIANNA  
ORBÁN MÁTÉ,  
Director, Via  
Carpatia EGTC



The following discussion developed this interesting point even further, turning the attention to the division of competencies at the regional level. Entitled "Urban Talk: Košice - An Emerging TECH Hub?", it featured four speakers with direct experience with regional development. As Marcel Gibóda, Vice Mayor, City of Košice, said, in order to succeed, we have to find ways to make our cities and regions more competitive, as we're currently lagging behind the regions in neighboring countries.

Anton Marcinčin, Co-founder, Regional Development Now!, introduced his regional initiative which aims to combine expert knowledge and shared goals into a meaningful reform.

PARTNERS



SUPPORTERS



He mentioned the crucial importance of governance, which is necessary to make proper use of the available resources. The reason Slovak regions struggle in this regard can be traced back to unfinished decentralization of the country.

The fact that we have joined forces is a guarantee of success.

PAVOL SOVÁK,  
Rector, University  
of P.J. Šafárik



and shared a positive attitude towards actively participating in making their region better.

There's no direct link between a better performing region and its financing - it creates a motivational problem at this level.

EDUARD  
DONAUER,  
Plenipotentiary  
for Strategic  
Planning, City of  
Bratislava



As Eduard Donauer, Plenipotentiary for Strategic Planning, City of Bratislava, explained, regions are not motivated to improve their financial performance, as a potential success in this area doesn't translate into additional financing from the state. Marcel Gibóda, Vice Mayor, City of Košice, added that cities in Slovakia don't have the competencies to offer promising investors better conditions and thus lose investments that could have brought much more in the long run to competing cities abroad.

Every country, Slovakia included, is only as rich as its regions.

ANTON  
MARCINČIN,  
Co-founder,  
Regional  
Development Now! /  
Former Director of Regional  
Development Section,  
Ministry of Investment,  
Regional Development and  
Informatization of SR



We shouldn't only talk about what's bad and what's not working but focus on what each of us can do in our own space to feel better and improve the conditions for the others.

MIROSLAV  
KIRALVARGA,  
Vice President  
External Affairs,  
Administration and Business  
Development, U. S. Steel Košice



The last discussion panel of the program brought together representatives of local businesses, ranging from industrial giant U.S. Steel Košice, to local success stories, which have grown way beyond Košice, as Promiseo or GymBeam. All of the panelists agreed that the private sector needs to play an active role in regional development

It was obvious that all the panelists strongly believe in the potential of the city and they all advocated a more positive and proactive approach - not to passively wait for a change for the better, but to start working on that change instead. This also requires a mindset shifts



CASE STUDIES

From left: Martin Mudrák of AmCham (Moderator); Julianna Orbán Máthé, Director, Via Carpatia EGTC; František Jakab, Director, University Science Park TECHNICOM (Technical University of Košice); Michal Hladký, Director, CIKE; and Pavol Sovák, Rector, University of P. J. Šafárik



URBAN TALK

From left: Martin Mudrák of AmCham (Moderator); Marcel Gibóda, Vice Mayor, City of Košice; Matej Ovčáčka, Director of the Department of Regional Development and Planning, Košice Self-governing Region; Anton Marcinčin, Co-founder, Regional Development Now! / Former Director of Regional Development Section, Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of SR; and Eduard Donauer, Plenipotentiary for Strategic Planning, City of Bratislava



FIRESIDE CHAT

From left: Barbora Ruščin of Tatra banka (Moderator); Dalibor Čicman, CEO, GymBeam; Miroslav Kiralvarga, Vice President External Affairs, Administration and Business Development, U. S. Steel Košice; Peter Šoltés, CEO, Promiseo; and Juraj Girman, VP - Telekom IT, Deutsche Telekom IT Solutions Slovakia / President, Košice IT Valley

which involves creating a culture promoting entrepreneurship and cooperation, which translates into how the people perceive their region. As Juraj Girman accentuated: "How we talk about our region has a big influence on what it becomes."

The positive message of these discussions underlined the focus on cooperation, giving back to the region and building on its existing strengths - its heritage, talent pool and universities - to create a new path which becomes a part of the region's identity. As Anton Marcinčin concluded: "If we don't enable

Košice to take care of itself, we'll have a problem."

We need to make success stories more visible – especially SMEs. To motivate people to stay here and work on their projects.

PETER ŠOLTÉS,  
CEO, Promiseo



For more pictures and executive summary visit [www.amcham.sk](http://www.amcham.sk)