

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS FORUM

Focus on Azerbaijan. New Business Opportunities

25 November 2025

14:00-17:00 at Estonian Business School (A. Lauteri 3, Tallinn)

13:30 – 14:00 Registration, Coffee and Networking

14:00 – 14:05 Introduction of the day by Master of Ceremonies **Mike Southon**

14:05 – 14:10 Greeting by **Mait Palts**, Director General of Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

14:10 – 14:35 Welcome Speeches:

Ahti Kuningas, Secretary General of Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications

H.E. Anar Abel Maharramov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Republic of Estonia

H.E. Kirsti Narinen, Ambassador to South Caucasus at MFA Finland **TBC**

H.E. Väino Reinart, Estonian Ambassador in Azerbaijan

14:35 – 14:50 **Keynote Speech: Economy of Azerbaijan in Figures.** **Rasim Mahmudov**, First Deputy CEO of Caspian Energy Club

14:50 – 15:05 **LEF Network Azerbaijan – project results**, **Līga Sičeva**, Director of the EU Projects Department of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce
LEF network Azerbaijan Success story video

15:05 – 15:50 **Panel Discussion: New Business Opportunities between Central Baltic Countries and Azerbaijan. Success stories and tips for cooperation**

Panel Moderator: **Mikko Pakkasela**, Head of Research, SAMK

Panelists:

Karim Ali, Business Development Director of GMM Finland Oy

Lauri Haav, CEO of //Kood

Līga Sičeva, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Dr. Shabnam Nuriyeva, Head of Career Center at the Azerbaijan State Customs Committee (ASCCA)

15:50 - 16:00 **Short overview of Market Research on ICT sector in Azerbaijan** by **Jonas Prien**, Market Studies Project Lead, SCHNEIDER GROUP GmbH

LEF network Azerbaijan

16:00 – 16:50 **Panel Discussion: AI as a tool to increase international cooperation**

Panel moderator: **Vattan PS**

Panelists:

Imants Bergs, CEO of Business University “Turība”

Otto Mättas, AI expert, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia

Pekka Suominen, PhD (Physics), Chief Researcher at RoboAI research center,
Satakunta University of Applied Sciences.

Gulmina A. Malikzade, Head of Project Management Department, Center for the
Fourth Industrial Revolution Azerbaijan

16:50 – 17:00 Wrap up of the day by Master of Ceremonies Mike Southon

Registration link:

[INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS FORUM Focus on Azerbaijan. New Business Opportunities – Fill out form](#)



Introduction of Speakers

Master of Ceremonies: Mike Southon www.mikesouthon.com

Mike is a serially successful entrepreneur, best-selling business author and highly experienced conference moderator, keynote speaker and event organiser.

in 1984 he co-founded a UNIX consultancy and helped build it to 150 people in five years, before its trade sale to Cap Gemini

Since then he has done a wide range of start-ups, including two that had public floatations

*In 2002 he co-authored *The Beermat Entrepreneur*, which has sold over 100,000 copies in many languages*

Mike has been visiting Estonia since 2008, when he interviewed the then President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, for the Financial Times

Today, he is very busy helping Estonian companies become Unicorns (billion dollar valuation), and promoting them worldwide

He is currently very active in several technologies, including CleanTech, e-commerce, education, defence, cyber security and embedded systems, all now involving leading-edge Artificial Intelligence



New Business Opportunities panel moderator Mikko Pakkasela

Mikko Pakkasela, M.Sc. in Industrial Engineering and Management and Head of Research at Business Intelligence Center in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. Also a member of Pori City Council and Certified Board Member.

I'm helping SMEs to develop their business towards full potential by analyzing data and utilizing knowledge. The aim is to support companies improve their efficiency, productivity, competitiveness and well-being. My areas of expertise covers a wide range of industries (printing, process technology, software and machining) including entrepreneurship, project management, RDI and administration/board work.



Panelists

Karim Ali

Karim Ali is an international business expert with over a decade of experience in global trade, entrepreneurship, and circular economy development. Currently serving as Business Development Director at GMM, he brings an entrepreneurial mindset to corporate growth and international cooperation, with a strong network across the Nordics and the MENA region.



In addition to his role at GMM, Karim serves as Regional Advisor at the Finnish Water Forum, promoting Finland's expertise and sustainable solutions internationally. He is also the Economic and Trade Advisor to the Ambassador of Egypt in Finland and the official representative of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) in Finland, Morocco, and Egypt.

A passionate connector and tireless business developer, Karim actively fosters partnerships that create long-term value and sustainable impact across regions.

Līga Sičeva

Director of EU Project Department, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)

Director of the LEF Network Azerbaijan project, which aims to strengthen cooperation between Latvian, Estonian, Finnish and Azerbaijani companies. With extensive more than 15 years experience in managing international projects both in Europe and beyond, she works to enhance SME competitiveness, facilitate international networking, and build long-term bridges between businesses, business support organizations.



Dr. Shabnam Nuriyeva

Head of Career Center at the Azerbaijan State Customs Committee (ASCCA)

Dr. Shabnam Nuriyeva is a political scientist and executive specializing in Public–Private Dialogue (PPD) with over 15 years of experience in public administration, business engagement, and capacity building. As former Senior Advisor to the President of the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (ASK), she led key initiatives to strengthen state–business cooperation, represented the private sector in national expert councils, and promoted dialogue-based policy development. Currently, she serves as Head of the Career Center at the Academy of the State Customs Committee and collaborates with the WCO ROCB (Baku) as a certified trainer in Conflict Management and Emotional Intelligence. Her background includes leadership roles in business consulting, agribusiness project coordination, and HR strategy within major national projects. Dr. Nuriyeva holds a PhD in Political Science and a Master's degree from the University of Siena, Italy.



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Lauri Haav

CEO of //Kood

“Having spent over two decades driving IT transformation and serving as Managing Director of Estonia’s e-Residency initiative, I now lead //kood, where we’re reinventing how programmers learn, connect and scale their skills.”



AI Panel Moderator Vattan PS

Since starting my entrepreneurial journey at 16, I've spent 20+ years seeing what others miss.

Where most see 90% startup failure rates, I see an outdated system ready for reinvention. Where others chase trends, I build new categories.

Building:

→ Foundrly – The global OS for founder success. Creating infrastructure where entrepreneurs get the support, resources, and connections they need to thrive.

→ V – Defining how humans and AI evolve together. Through Agency.AI and augmented intelligence tools, proving that human + AI collaboration unlocks impossible outcomes.

These aren't random experiments. They're infrastructure for expanding what humans can achieve.

Made in India, based in Estonia. I've shaped our AI ecosystem through New Nordics AI Week, EstoniAI Meetups, and AI/ML Forum. Estonia is where I build, and what I create here scales globally. 🇧🇮

I don't build bridges between old worlds. I create infrastructure for new ones.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/vattan/>



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Panelists

Otto Mättas

Otto is an applied AI researcher with over 15 years of international experience and a portfolio of 100+ projects spanning machine learning, expert systems, and human–computer interaction.

He has delivered solutions across a wide range of domains—from commercial banking and healthcare to mission-critical systems and governmental initiatives—and conducted research on critical infrastructure resilience, information weaponisation, privacy in social networks, and open data initiatives for the Estonian parliament.



As a technical expert in consortia such as AI & Robotics Estonia and Science and Business Park Tehnopol, Otto continues to mentor startups and established firms alike, bridging deep technical know-how with strategic business insight to drive transformative growth that keeps human values and needs in mind. As an Early Stage Researcher at Taltech, his research focus is on application architectures of neuro-symbolic artificial intelligence. *(Fun fact: His creative approach earned a third prize at the AI Eurovision competition, reflecting his ability to engage broader audiences with AI <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbsWkhcJjg4>)*