

Telekom Srbija will expand its network to the German market in May, and to the American market at the end of the year, and plans to enter the European stock market with corporate bonds, as well as to promote its production of films and series on a global level, says the company's general manager, Vladimir Lučić.

In an interview for Tanjug on the subject of the company's plans and challenges in the year ahead, he said that the modern era and the Internet era "go hand in hand" with Telekom's business and emphasized that the company will continue to finance innovative and digital ideas through the Venture Fund for Startups.

He added that it is a good opportunity for young people from the region and for the company to enter the global market.

Lučić pointed out that Telekom achieved record results in 2022, regardless of the geopolitical situation in Europe, and that he expects to continue this trend in 2023.

"In 2022, Telekom Srbija's revenue in Serbia increased by more than 10 percent, mostly thanks to the growth in the number of Internet and television users," said Lučić.

He also said that the number of Internet and television users in 2022 will increase by about 100,000, and that the number of television users in Serbia alone will exceed 1.2 million users.

Lučić said that when it comes to the mobile network, the company also increased its revenue by 10 percent, and that the company earned 100 million euros more compared to 2021.

He emphasized that Telekom's income, when all results are summed up in 2022, will be more than 1.5 billion euros, while the revenue in Serbia alone will be more than 1 billion euros.

"This was a good and successful year from the point of view of technological development, revenue and number of users," emphasized the director of Telekom.

He pointed out that it is very important that Telekom Srbije expanded, as a mobile operator, to two more countries - Switzerland and North Macedonia - during the last year.

"It seems to me that 2023 is the year when we should position ourselves well at the awareness game," Lučić emphasized.

He announced that Telekom will expand its network to the German market in May and reminded that the project was planned to be implemented earlier, but due to the situation with the pandemic, it was postponed to 2023.

He also added that the plan is for Telekom to expand its mobile network to the US by the end of the year or at the latest in early 2024, as well as to offer its services and products to the Turkish market.

Lučić said that the company expects a big expansion in the coming period when it comes to digital services and multimedia content.

"Apart from the fact that we will position ourselves in the countries where there is our

diaspora and where our content and digital services will be sold to the diaspora of the entire area of the former Yugoslavia, we want to reach other users as well”, he points out.

In support of this, he said, the fact that the company is looking for new universal digital ideas through the Startup Development Fund, in order to conquer the whole world, speaks for itself.

The head of Telecom expressed the expectation that in the first half of the year, as was the case before, the company will work on partnerships with large multinational companies such as Vodafone, Bloomberg, Euronews and the European Investment Bank.

According to him, Telekom is the only company in the Western Balkans that, with the financial support of the European Investment Bank, is trying to market 5G networks.

Lucic added that he hopes for partnerships with major American internet players.

“It seems to me that by April we could please the public here with partnerships with big internet players, which will give us new strength here, new availability to our services, both digital and multimedia - production, all over the world,” he said.

He assessed that the Internet has enabled small players to become big, as well as part of the global market.

He believes that Telekom will become a competitive company on a global level with new projects and unique ideas that will be marketed on the world market.

“In that culmination of our great dominance in the region with the telecommunications markets and thanks to the creation of those new creative projects of digital services and production, I think that we will start to significantly increase revenue and expand. And that Telekom Srbija will become a global telecommunications and multimedia player”, said Lucic.

When asked what challenges Telekom Srbija expects in 2023, Lučić said that due to good organization, his company achieves record results and resists challenges arising as a result of the geopolitical situation in Europe and the accompanying financial crisis.

He repeated that his company achieved top results when it comes to revenue and reminded that it paid out 6.7 billion in dividends in December.

“Since we paid out 4.8 billion in dividends in November 2021, we actually paid out almost 100 million euros in dividends in 13 months,” he said.

This shows, he points out, that the company organized itself very well and that it did not have the consequences of the financial crisis, as well as that it has a lot of capacity to expand in the coming period, when certain trends are expected to calm down.

Due to the financial crisis, some Telekom projects have been postponed, said Lučić, recalling that the company had a plan to enter the European stock market in 2022 and issue corporate bonds.

He announced that the company will go public in April or May with a financial report from 2022.

“I believe that it would be good for our company, because going public means even greater transparency of business, especially since we want to be global players, but considering the unstable capital market on the stock exchanges and the fact that we still get better conditions than the commercial banks themselves, even though we have everything prepared and we have passed the rating agency, we have moved that plan to next April or May,” said Lučić.

He added that the company is in a very good financial position, which is why there was no pressure to go public as soon as possible and take on additional debt by issuing corporate bonds. Lucic expects that the stock market will stabilize in the coming period.

She pointed out that the company completed most of its investments in the last four years when the financing was the best and that it will reduce its debt in 2023.

“This is very important to us for better transparent business and attracting some American companies, which would take those corporate bonds and then it would be an additional incentive to expand even better”, concluded Lučić.

When it comes to production, Lučić assesses that the entire Serbian production was moved to a higher level when Telekom entered the market, and that quality films and series have never been filmed again.

“I think we will continue with that trend. I can boast that even now, even though we are a young production, we are selling our series on five continents,” Lučić pointed out.

He emphasized that Telekom’s production achieved cooperation with two platforms – it sold two series to Disney Plus and one to Amazon.

Lučić says that our films and series, thanks to the creative teams – from directors to screenwriters to talented actors, are of the same production quality as HBO and Netflix products.

“The promotion of some films and series in the world is starting more and more. Our films and series are becoming a kind of normality on the platforms, and I am especially glad that we have brought the entire region to Belgrade and that Belgrade has become a film-production center,” said Lučić.

When asked if he has any personal or professional wishes for 2023, Lučić points out that on a business level, he wants Telekom Srbija to become a global telecommunications player, while privately he wants to spend more time with his family, Euronews writes.