



# REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

## *Facts and Figures*

2023 Edition

# REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

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FACTS AND FIGURES

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## **FOREWORD 4**

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## **AT A GLANCE 6**

---

The Republic	6
Coat of arms	8
Flag	8
National anthem	8
Constitution	8
Currency	8
National Day	8
Demographics	10
Geography and Climate	13

## **THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEM 16**

---

Form of government and the separation of powers	16
Parliament - legislative branch	17
The President	20
The Executive Branch - Government	22
The Judicial Branch	23
Courts in the Republic	24
The State Prosecutor	25

## **FOREIGN POLICY 26**

---

Historical Background	28
Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008	29
European integration	30

Regional cooperation	31
SEECF	31
Kosovo in the Berlin Process	32
Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)	32
EU-facilitated dialogue for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia	33
International organizations	33
Public diplomacy	34
Economic diplomacy	35
Digital diplomacy	35

## **BUSINESS AND THE ECONOMY 36**

---

Legislative framework for doing business in Kosovo	36
Taxes	38
Kosovo's economy	40

## **THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO 41**

---

Introduction	41
The public broadcaster – Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK)	42
Private national terrestrial TV stations	42
Private national TV stations that broadcast via satellite	43
Regional TV stations	43
Local radio stations	44
Online media	44

Regulation in the media sector  
in Kosovo 44

**CIVIL SOCIETY IN  
THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO 45**

---

**MIGRATION 48**

---

**KOSOVO'S CONNECTION  
WITH ITS DIASPORA AND  
DIASPORA POTENTIAL 52**

---

**THE IMPERMANENCE  
OF A PERMANENT PEACE 55**

---

**KOSOVO AS A COUNTRY OF  
RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE 58**

---

**CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS 63**

---

**FOOD IN KOSOVO 66**

---

**WINE 72**

---

**KOSOVO'S MUSIC 74**

---

**SPORT IN KOSOVO 77**

---

**THE FASHION  
DESIGN INDUSTRY 81**

---

**KOSOVO AND  
ALTERNATIVE TOURISM 85**

---

Battle of Kosovo – Field of Blackbirds 85

Promotion of Coffee Culture 87

Monuments to American Presidents 88

**MOUNTAINS 89**

---

**CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND THE ENVIRONMENT 91**

---

Climate Change 91

Energy 92

Waste 94

Air Quality 95

Water 97

Biodiversity 98

Bibliography 99



# FOREWORD

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Kosovo is the newest country in Europe, having declared independence on 2008, and with over 70% of the population under the age of 35, Kosovo is also the youngest country in Europe.

Its recent statehood and youthful population, rich cultural heritage, costumes and living traditions, make Kosovo a vibrant and energetic place. Among these traditions is the now famous Kosovan hospitality, generosity and ability to create an inviting environment for everyone who visits the country. It is a must-see for anyone who loves a good macchiato or likes to enjoy fine dining on a low budget.

Kosovo has a multiethnic character and is a secular state with a population of around 1.7 million. It is open to foreign investments, with the lowest tax rates in Europe. The country has a strong connection to Western cul-

ture through its large diaspora community, concentrated especially in the DACH region (Germany, Austria and Switzerland). With 542.000 Kosovars living only in Germany.

Through this publication, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and its partner, the German-Kosovar Business Association, aim to share basic information about the Republic of Kosovo. The text is targeted at members of the international community who need additional information about the country within a single publication. The publication is divided into 19 chapters, each of them sharing information, in facts and figures, about the country. *The Republic of Kosovo: facts and figures* aims to help Kosovo promote itself internationally and present the opportunities available.

We wish you a pleasant reading of discovery.



# AT A GLANCE



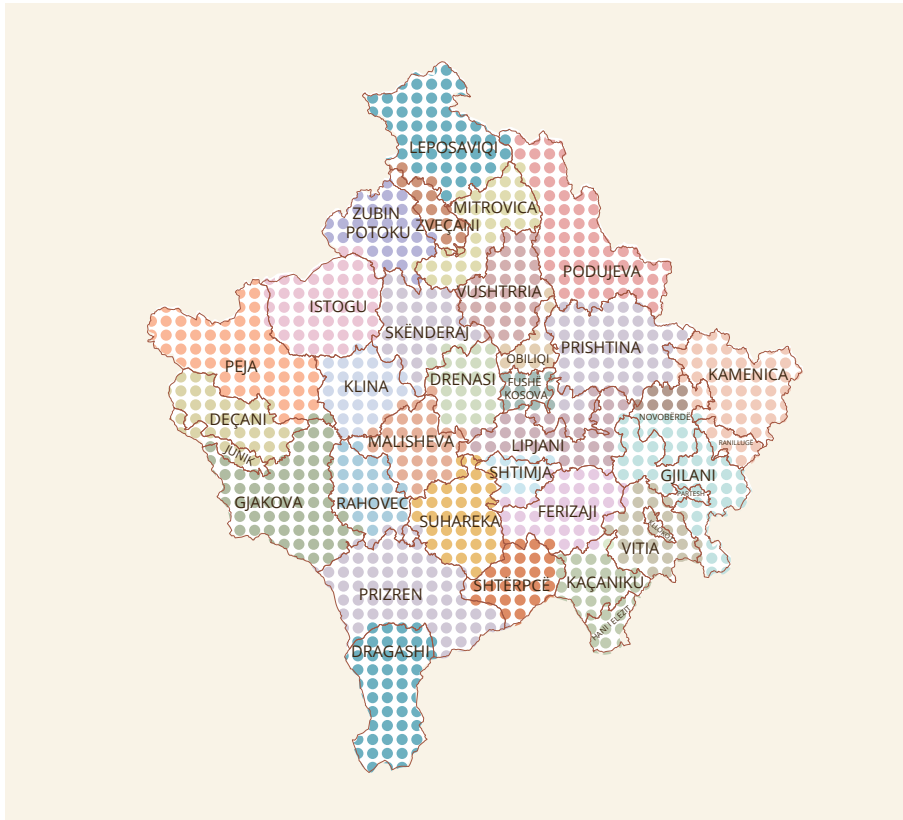
## The Republic

Kosovo is a multi-party, parliamentary representative democratic state. It is governed by legislative, executive and judicial institutions established under the Constitution, which is the highest legal act of the Republic of Kosovo. The government exercises executive powers and is composed of the Prime Minister as the head of government, deputy prime ministers and ministers of the various ministries. The President is the head of state.

Since declaring its independence, Kosovo has been recognized as a sovereign state by 117 countries.

Kosovo is administratively subdivided into seven districts and 38 municipalities. Municipalities in Kosovo are units of local self-government. The largest municipality is the capital, Prishtina/Pristina, with a population of 204,721.

# The administrative map of districts in Kosovo



- |                         |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ District of Prishtina | ■ District of Mitrovica | ■ District of Ferizaj |
| ■ District of Prizren   | ■ District of Gjakova   |                       |
| ■ District of Peja      | ■ District of Gjilan    |                       |



## Coat of arms

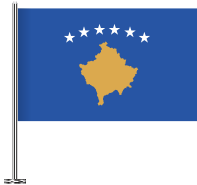
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The coat of arms shows six white stars in an arc above a solid golden outline of Kosovo, as seen on a standard projection map, placed on a rounded triangular shield with a blue field and a golden border. Its central figures, the stars, and the map outline, are also the components of the flag of Kosovo, adopted at the same time.

## Flag

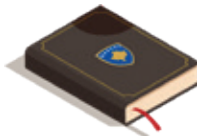
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The flag of Kosovo shows six white stars in an arc above a golden map of Kosovo on a blue field. The stars symbolize Kosovo's six major ethnic groups.

## Constitution

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The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, which was signed on April 7, 2008, separates the government into three branches: legislative, executive, and judiciary.

## Currency

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The country's official currency is the Euro. Kosovo is not a member of the Euro Zone but the country unilaterally adopted the Euro in 2002 during the United Nations Interim Administration mandate, and has used it ever since as its de facto currency.

## National Day

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February 17<sup>th</sup> is the national holiday commemorating Kosovo's Declaration of Independence by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo on the same date in 2008.

# National anthem

'Europe' is the national anthem of Kosovo. It was composed by Mendi Mengjiqi. It has no official lyrics, and one of the reasons for this choice was because it contained no references to any specific ethnic group, but unofficial lyrics have been written for it. It was adopted on June 11, 2008.

Piano

♩ = 70

*f*

The first system of the musical score is for piano. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 70. The music begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with quarter and eighth notes.

Pno.

*mp*

The second system of the musical score continues the piece. It is marked mezzo-piano (*mp*). The melodic line in the right hand continues with similar rhythmic patterns, and the accompaniment in the left hand remains consistent.

Pno.

The third system of the musical score continues the piece. The melodic line in the right hand features some sixteenth-note passages, and the accompaniment in the left hand continues with quarter and eighth notes.

Pno.

The fourth system of the musical score concludes the piece. The melodic line in the right hand ends with a final note, and the accompaniment in the left hand provides a final harmonic support.

# Demographics

The average life expectancy in the Republic of Kosovo is 71.65 years. Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe with half of its population under the age of 25, according to a recent report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Government data estimates that more than 65% of the population is younger than 30. Kosovo's birth rate remains the highest in Europe.

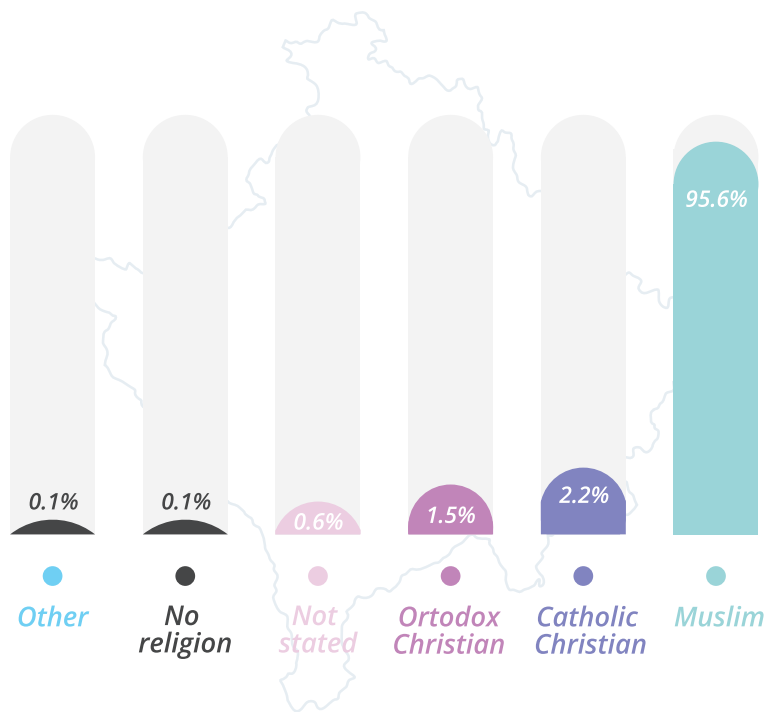
According to the first census conducted after the declaration of independence, in 2011, Kosovo's permanent population amounted to 1,739,825 inhabitants, excluding North Kosovo. Albanians form the majority in Kosovo, with over 93% of the total population; significant minorities include Ashkali, Bosniaks, Croats, Egyptians, Gorani, Roma, Serbs, and Turks. However, the 2011 Kosovo population census was largely boycotted by Kosovo Serbs, especially in North Kosovo, leaving the Serb population underrepresented.

The results of the 2011 census gave the following religious affiliations for the population included in the census: Islam 95.6%, Christianity 3.7%, of which 2.2% are Roman Catholic and 1.5% Eastern Orthodox, other 0.1%, no religion 0.1%, and not stated 0.6%.

## AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY

71.65  
YEARS





## POPULATION

1,739,825





# Geography and Climate

Kosovo is landlocked and located in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula in Southeastern Europe. It has a total area of 10,908 square kilometres. Forests cover at least 39% of the country. Kosovo's biodiversity is conserved in two national parks, eleven nature reserves and 103 other protected areas. The Bjeshkët e Nemuna (Accursed Mountains) and Sharr Mountains are the most important regions of vegetation and biodiversity in Kosovo, and the mountainous west and southeast regions provide great habitats for several rare or endangered animal species. A total of 255 species of birds have been recorded, with raptors living principally in the mountains in Kosovo.

The mountains of Kosovo belong to the Dinaric Alps range, while the Kosovo Plain is on average 550m above sea level and the Dukagjini Plain is on average 450m above sea level. The Dinaric Alps in the east and the Sharr Mountains in the south are home to the highest peaks in Kosovo, rising well over 2000m. Kosovo is home to five large lakes. The largest lake is Gazivoda Lake, in the north-western part of Kosovo, in the municipality of Zubin Potok. The other large lakes in Kosovo are Radoniqi Lake, Batllava Lake, Badovc Lake, and Fierza Reservoir.

Kosovo has an average of 160 rainy days per year and 2,066 hours of sun. On average, Kosovo receives about 760mm of rainfall per year.

Gjeravica is the highest mountain in Kosovo at 2656m.

The Ibri/Ibar river is the longest river in Kosovo with 272km.

Most of Kosovo experiences a temperate climate with Mediterranean and alpine influences. The climate is strongly influenced by its proximity to the Adriatic Sea to the west and the Aegean Sea to the south but also the European continental landmass to the north. The coldest areas of Kosovo are the mountains in the west and southeast, where the alpine climate prevails. The warmest areas are mostly in the extreme southern areas close to the border with Albania, and are characterized by a Mediterranean climate. The north-east, the Kosovo Plain, and Ibri/Ibar Valley, are influenced by continental air masses with colder winters and very hot summers. In the southwest, the climatic area of Dukagjini receives more Mediterranean influences with warmer summers and heavy snowfalls in the winter. The mountainous areas - the Bjeshkët e Nemuna (Accursed Mountains) in the west, the Sharr mountains in the south, and Kopaonik in the north, experience an alpine climate, with short and fresh summers and cold winters.



**LOCATION**

*Southeast Europe*



**SURFACE AREA**

*10,908 km*



**HOURS OF SUN**

*2066 hours*



**CAPITAL**

*Pristina*

571.46 km<sup>2</sup>



**RAIN**

*760 mm*



**FORESTED AREA**

*464,800 ha*



**BORDERLINE**

*743.5 km*



**HIGHEST MOUNTAIN**

*Gjeravica*

2.656m



**LONGEST RIVER**

*White Drin*

122 km in Kosovo





# THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

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by Jeta Krasniqi

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M.A. in International Relations by Johns Hopkins University (JHU) / School of Advanced  
International Studies (SAIS)*



## Form of government and the separation of powers

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Kosovo is a democratic republic based on the separation of powers. The Assembly of Kosovo is the legislative institution, the President represents the unity of the people, while the government exercises executive power and is subject to parliamentary control.

Kosovo has a multiethnic character which is represented by its national symbols, the flag, the seal and the anthem. There are two official languages, Albanian and Serbian, and the law indicates the instances when Turkish, Bosnian and Roma have the status of official languages at municipal level. Kosovo is a secular state.



## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

# Parliament

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The Assembly is the legislative institution of the Republic of Kosovo and is directly elected by voters of age eighteen and above. The Assembly is composed of 120 MPs elected for a period of four years, starting from the day of the constitutive session. Twenty out of the 120 seats are guaranteed for

non-majority communities. A minimum of ten seats are guaranteed for representatives from the Kosovo Serb community. A minimum of ten further seats are guaranteed in total for other non-majority communities, namely Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Bosnian, Turk, and Gorani.

Any citizen of the Republic of Kosovo who is eighteen or older and meets the legal criteria, is eligible to become a candidate for the Assembly. A member of the Assembly of Kosovo may not hold any executive position in the public administration or in any publicly-owned enterprise, nor exercise any other executive function.

The Assembly has a 30% gender quota which has resulted in greater representation of women in the Assembly. In the elections of February 14, 2021, a record number of 43 women were elected, representing 35 percent of all MPs, above the 30 percent quota mandated by the law on general elections.

The Assembly of Kosovo adopts laws, resolutions and other general acts. The constitution (based on the Ahtisaari Plan) identifies certain legislative acts as being of vital interest. Changing the nature of such legislation, whether through amendment, repeal, or adoption, requires a 'double majority' of MPs: a majority of the MPs present and voting as well as a majority of non-majority communities' MPs present and voting.

The Assembly may also amend the Constitution by decision of two thirds of all its MPs, including two thirds of all MPs holding seats reserved and guaranteed for representatives of communities that are not in the majority in Kosovo. This constitutional prerogative gives the power of veto to non-majority communities.

The Assembly ratifies international treaties and adopts the budget of the Republic of Kosovo. It is the responsibility of the As-

sembly to elect or dismiss the Speaker and deputy speakers of the Assembly, to elect or dismiss the President of the Republic of Kosovo in accordance with this constitution, and to appoint the government or pass a vote of no confidence.

The Assembly oversees the work of the government and other public institutions that report to the Assembly, and it elects members of the Kosovo Judicial Council and the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, while also proposing the judges for the Constitutional Court.

The meetings of the Assembly of Kosovo are public, but they can be closed upon the request of the President of the Republic of Kosovo, the Prime Minister, or one third of the MPs. The decision must be adopted by two thirds of the vote of all MPs present and voting.

Parliamentary commissions are working organs of the Assembly where representatives of all parliamentary groups are present. The Assembly of Kosovo has four standing committees and ten functional committees. At the request of one third of the members of the Assembly, the Assembly may appoint a committee to investigate a particular matter. At least one deputy chair of each parliamentary committee must be from a community that is different from that of the chair.

Parliament can be dissolved in a few cases, such as when a government has not been formed sixty days after the appointment of the candidate for Prime Minister by the President, or the President can dissolve the

Assembly after the passing of a vote of no confidence in the government. MPs themselves can vote in favour of dissolving the Assembly by two thirds of votes and the

Assembly can be dissolved by the President by decree or if the President cannot be elected within sixty days from the start of his/her election.



# The President

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The President of the Republic of Kosovo is the head of state and represents the unity of the people. The Constitution has given the right to any citizen of the Republic of Kosovo who is 35 years old or older to be elected as President of the country. The President is elected by the Assembly by a secret ballot. The candidate for the President should receive in advance at least thirty signatures of MPs and must be elected by a two thirds majority of all MPs of all the Assembly. The term of office is five years and the President can be elected for two terms. The President may not exercise any other public function or exercise any functions within any political party.

The President of the Republic of Kosovo can, among other things, represent the Republic of Kosovo, internally and externally, and must guarantee the functioning of institutions according to the Constitution. She/he is the Commander-in-Chief of the Kosovo Security Force and leads the Consultative Council for Communities.

The President plays an important role in the constitutional functioning of institutions. The President may call elections for the Assembly of Kosovo and convenes its first meeting. She/he issues decrees, promulgates laws adopted by the Assembly of Kosovo, proposes amendments to the Constitution and signs international agreements. The President has the right to return adopted laws for re-consideration when

she/he considers them to be harmful to the legitimate interests of the Republic of Kosovo or one or more communities. This right can be exercised only once per law.

The President appoints the candidate for Prime Minister for the establishment of the government, upon proposal from the political party or coalition holding the majority in the Assembly, and in the second round may exercise her/his discretion to mandate the political party/coalition to which she/he offers the second candidate for Prime Minister.

The President and the government share joint responsibilities in a few areas. On the recommendation of the government, the President appoints the Commander of the Kosovo Security Force, appoints and dismisses heads of Kosovo's diplomatic missions, and can declare a state of emergency in consultation with the Prime Minister. Jointly with the Prime Minister, the President appoints the Director, Deputy Director and Inspector General of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency.

Upon proposal of the institutions of the justice system, the President can appoint or dismiss judges, prosecutors, the President of the Supreme Court and the Chief Prosecutor of Kosovo. The President also appoints Constitutional Court judges, upon the proposal of the Assembly. Since April 4, 2021, the sitting President of Kosovo is Dr. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu.

# Presidents of Kosovo:



**Ibrahim Rugova**

(March 4, 2002 – January 21, 2006; died in office)



**Fatmir Sejdiu**

(February 10, 2006 – September 27, 2010)



**Jakup Krasniqi**

(acting President: September 27, 2010 – February 22, 2011)



**Behgjet Pacolli**

(February 22, 2011 – April 4, 2011)



**Atifete Jahjaga**

(April 7, 2011 – April 7, 2016)



**Hashim Thaçi**

(April 7, 2016 – November 5, 2020)



**Dr. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu**

(April 4, 2021 - )



## THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

# Government

The government exercises executive power and implements the laws and other acts adopted by the Assembly of Kosovo. The government has the power to propose draft laws and amendments of existing laws or give opinion on draft laws which are not proposed by it, and also propose amendments to the Constitution. The government also has the power to propose and implement the internal and foreign policies of the state, propose the state budget and promote the economic development of the country. It oversees the work of the administration and guides the development of public services. The government also plays a role in supporting cultural initiatives from communities and their members. More-

over, through the Consultative Council for Communities, the government takes into consideration the comments of communities on legislative or policy initiatives and ensures regular exchange with communities.

The candidate for Prime Minister must, no later than fifteen days from their appointment by the President, present the composition of the government to the Assembly and request its approval. For the government to be elected, it must receive the majority vote of all MPs of the Assembly of Kosovo. If the candidate does not present the composition of the government or does not receive the necessary votes for

approval, the President appoints another candidate within a period of ten days.

The government is appointed by the Assembly, which also has the right to express a vote of no confidence. The Prime Minister may change any members of the government without the consent of the Assembly.

The Government is composed of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister(s) and ministers. Kosovo does not have a law on government; thus, the size of the government is at the discretion of the governing coalition. Nevertheless, the Constitution clearly stipulates the division of ministers/ deputy ministers among different communities residing in Kosovo.

If the government is composed of twelve min-

isters, at least one minister should be from the Kosovo Serb community and one from other non-majority community. If the government is bigger, the Constitution indicates the proportion of ministers and deputy ministers which should be guaranteed for non-majority communities. The selection of these government representatives (ministers and deputy ministers) shall be determined after consultation with the group representing these respective communities.

The Prime Minister represents and leads the government, ensures the implementation of government policies by the relevant ministers and, among other competences, is also entitled to appoint the General Director of the Police and to chair the Kosovo Security Council.

## The Judicial Branch

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The judicial power is independent and exercised by the courts. In 2010, the Assembly of Kosovo adopted the Law on Courts which

changed the system of courts and prosecution offices.







## Courts in the Republic

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The court system in Kosovo is composed of Basic Courts, the Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court. There are seven principal seats of Basic Courts in Kosovo, which are the courts of first instance. Each basic court can maintain branches of the court. The Court of Appeals which, in accordance with the Agreement on Justice between Kosovo and Serbia, has a division in North Mitrovica, operates as the second instance court. The Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority. The representation of non-majority communities is ensured in the justice system as the Constitution stipulates that at least 15% of the judges of the Supreme Court and no fewer than three shall be from non-majority communities. The same principle is applicable for judges from any other court.

The independence and impartiality of the justice system is ensured by the Kosovo Judicial Council which performs its functions as an independent institution.

The Constitutional Court is the final authority entitled to interpret the Constitution and whether laws are in compliance with the Constitution. The Assembly of Kosovo, the President of the country, the government, and the Ombudsperson, are authorized to refer to the Constitutional Court matters as set out in the Constitution. After exhausting all legal remedies set out in law, even individuals are authorized to refer violations of their individual rights and freedoms as guaranteed by the Constitution.



## The State Prosecutor

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The State Prosecutor in Kosovo is an independent institution which has the authority and responsibility to prosecute persons in breach of law. This institution reflects the multiethnic composition of the state of Kosovo and gender equality principles. Prosecutors have an initial mandate of three years which becomes permanent until retirement at reappointment. The Chief State Prosecutor has a mandate of seven years and cannot be reappointed. She/he is appointed and can be dismissed by the President upon the proposal of the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council. The State Prosecution organizational structure consists of the office of the Chief State Prosecutor, appellate prosecution, special prosecution and seven basic prosecutions, composed of general departments, the department for

minors and the serious crimes prosecution department.

The Kosovo Prosecutorial Council is an independent institution whose mandate is to ensure that all persons have access to justice. It is mandated to ensure that the State Prosecutor is independent, professional and impartial, reflecting the principles of the multiethnic nature of the Kosovo state and gender equality.



# FOREIGN POLICY

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Dr. Valon Murtezaj

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The Republic of Kosovo declared its independence on February 17, 2008. Since then, Kosovo has moved forward, there are results to be proud of both internally and in the international arena. In a rapidly changing world, Kosovo, the youngest state in Europe, is more internationally-oriented than ever.

The Republic of Kosovo belongs to Europe by virtue of its history, culture and geography. Kosovo's foreign policy is based on the European values embodied in its constitu-

tion. Kosovo is strongly committed to the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo reflect the highest international standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The main goal of Kosovo's foreign policy is to strengthen its statehood internationally. For the Republic of Kosovo, European integration and strong partnership with the United States is at the very essence of its foreign policy. A world with the prospect

of prosperity based on cooperation is the long-term orientation and central working principle of Kosovo's diplomacy.

With an active foreign policy, Kosovo aims to strengthen its position as a serious and respected actor in the international system. In this context, Kosovo foreign policy aims to promote and contribute to international peace and stability, democracy and human rights, and the rule of law.

Kosovo foreign policy is based on the belief that it is essential for both the European Union and the United States to stand and work together, coordinated in supporting the Western Balkans with a clear European future by encouraging and supporting continued reforms and reconciliation in the region.

The beginnings of the foreign policy of the Republic of Kosovo are linked with the vision and work of Ibrahim Rugova, the man who planted the idea of independence and first president of the Republic of Kosovo. Under his leadership during the 1990s, the issue of Kosovo became known and inter-

nationalized. During the 'nineties the aim of foreign policy was to raise awareness among western democracies about the discrimination and apartheid implemented by the Serbian regime of Milošević.

Since its independence in 2008, Kosovo's foreign policy has been formulated and implemented by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Kosovo implements an active foreign policy, which is in line with the dream of the people of Kosovo for Euro-Atlantic integration. That involves passionate engagement in strengthening relations with international partners, contributing to good neighbourly relations.

Finally, through its foreign affairs Kosovo promotes and contributes to world peace, and the principles of cooperation and mutual respect among states. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has upended the European and international order. This has been followed with tension in Kosovo as well. In this situation Kosovo joined sanctions on entities that undermine the territorial integrity, sovereignty and the independence of Ukraine.





## Historical Background

### *Kosovo's constitutional position in the former Yugoslavia and illegal loss of autonomy in 1989*

The Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of 1974 brought republic status for Kosovo in all but name. When Yugoslavia broke up in 1991-1992, several republics declared their independence as separate states and the Republic of Kosovo is one of the seven states that emerged.

Before that, in 1989, the Milošević regime made destructive political changes which destroyed the autonomy of Kosovo. This step was part of an overall campaign to secure Serbia's domination over the Yugoslav Federation at that time. In March 1989, Serbia forced the Kosovo Assembly to accept changes in the Constitution, ille-

gally removing Kosovo's autonomy. This was the starting point of a new era of the Milošević regime's oppression and brutality against Kosovo Albanians in Kosovo which ended with armed conflict in 1998-1999. More than 12 000 people were killed, and around 1 million deported out of Kosovo, while around 1600 persons are still missing. This led to the involvement of the international community in the Kosovo issue, and the application of the entire diplomacy arsenal of tools available, including NATO humanitarian military action against Serb Army and other military forces, to halt the violence and bring an end to the humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo.



## Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008

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At an extraordinary meeting convened on February 17, 2008, the democratically elected representatives of the people of Kosovo declared Kosovo to be an independent and sovereign state. In the Declaration of Independence, it is noted that this act 'reflects the will of our people and is in full accordance with the recommendations of United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari and his Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo

Status Settlement'. In 2010, the International Court of Justice ruled that Kosovo's Declaration of Independence did not violate international law or UNSC1244.

Today, the Republic of Kosovo is an independent state, currently recognized as a sovereign and independent state by 117 states from all continents. These states include all neighbouring countries, except Serbia.



## European integration

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The Republic of Kosovo belongs to Europe. Kosovo and its people believe in the European Union (EU). Like its neighbours in the Western Balkans, Kosovo enjoys the prospect of a European future in the framework of the EU's enlargement processes. The prospect of EU membership for all Western Balkans countries was reaffirmed at the European Council in Thessaloniki in June 2003. EU heads of state have consistently supported a European path for the region. In December 2022 in Tirana, EU reconfirmed its full and unequivocal commitment to the European Union membership perspective of the Western Balkans.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) entered into force in April 2016 as a comprehensive contract between Kosovo and the European Union (EU). The SAA serves as a guide for Kosovo's European integration process by identifying necessary political, economic and legal reforms. The government of the Republic of Kosovo

is the central national institution for fulfilling the obligations arising from the SAA.

There are two interrelated documents with the aim of implementing all reforms for the adoption of the EU *acquis* into national legislation in all its chapters: the National Program for Implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, and the European Reform Agenda, setting out political-level priorities and concrete reforms for their implementation. In December 2022 Kosovo formally applied for membership to the European Union.

In another dimension, Kosovo has made significant progress in its roadmap towards a visa-free regime by fulfilling all requirement of the process. The decision to liberalise visas for citizens of Kosovo was approved at all stages within EU institutions. As such, the decision must come into effect no later than January 1, 2024.



## Regional cooperation

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It is among the core pillars of Kosovo's foreign policy to promote regional cooperation and to engage as a factor for stability in the region. Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are essential for progress on the Western Balkan countries' respective European paths. The European Commission has declared regional cooperation in the Western Balkans to be a key condition for joining the EU. Recognizing this regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations as important prerequisites for joining the European Union, the Kosovo government has, via its Ministry

of Foreign Affairs, put these among its foreign policy priorities.

Kosovo is a member of many important regional initiatives where it contributes actively within their respective structures with the aim that the benefits of regional cooperation will ultimately reflect on the lives of its citizens. Kosovo's foreign policy has consistently contributed to the creation of a regional culture which recognizes constructive dialogue among neighbouring countries, based on mutual respect and recognition.

## SEECF

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The South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECF) was launched in 1996 in Sofia with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation, trust, good neighbourly relations, stability, security, economic relations, engagement in the human dimen-

sion, justice, the fight against organized crime, and the fight against terrorism. At the Bucharest Summit in 2014, Kosovo joined this important regional political process, and Kosovo chaired the SEECF during 2019-2020.



# Kosovo in the Berlin Process

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Since 2014 the Western Balkans' Berlin Process, initiated by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, served as a framework for regional cooperation between Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, and as a new European political process in the region. The process has been fully supported by other EU members states (Austria, Croatia, France, Italy, and Slovenia). In addition, part of the process were EU institutions such as the European Commission, and international financial institutions.

Kosovo's foreign policy fully supported and contributed to this framework that included regional cooperation, sustainable economic growth, democracy, and reconciliation. Kosovo's foreign policy contributes substantively to this idea of building peace and prosperity for the region while offering a clear European future. Kosovo is commit-

ted to developing reconciliation, an environment with adequate infrastructure for creating jobs, business opportunities, and to ensure implementation of youth and education activities.

As an important mechanism developed during the WB process is Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO). Its main role is to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through youth exchange programs. Kosovo chaired the governing board of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office in 2019. In November 2022 in Berlin, the six countries reached agreements that will facilitate citizens' free movement throughout the region, on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications in the Western Balkans and on Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors of Medicine, Dentists and Architects based on EU rules.

## Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

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Kosovo participated actively in the RCC's work on regional cooperation and the Euro-Atlantic integration of the South-East European participants. It is the mission of the RCC to foster connectivity, skills and mobility, competitiveness, the rule of law and security cooperation efforts among its

members, and Kosovo has played a valued role in further developing the forms of regional cooperation. Kosovo was a constructive actor in all political consultations within the RCC framework and in implementing regionally-agreed agendas.

# EU-facilitated dialogue for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia

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The Republic of Kosovo has been an independent state since 17 February 2008. The EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, which commenced back in 2011, is for the normalization of relations between the two countries, to promote cooperation between the two countries, help them achieve progress on the path to Europe and improve the lives of the people. Recently, as part of this EU facilitated dialogue pro-

cess, in February 2023, Kosovo and Serbia agreed on the EU Proposal – “Agreement on the path to the normalization between Kosovo and Serbia”. The final aim of this dialogue is to achieve a comprehensive legally binding agreement on full normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia as two independent countries, and to ensure security, stability and prosperity of the entire region.

## International organizations

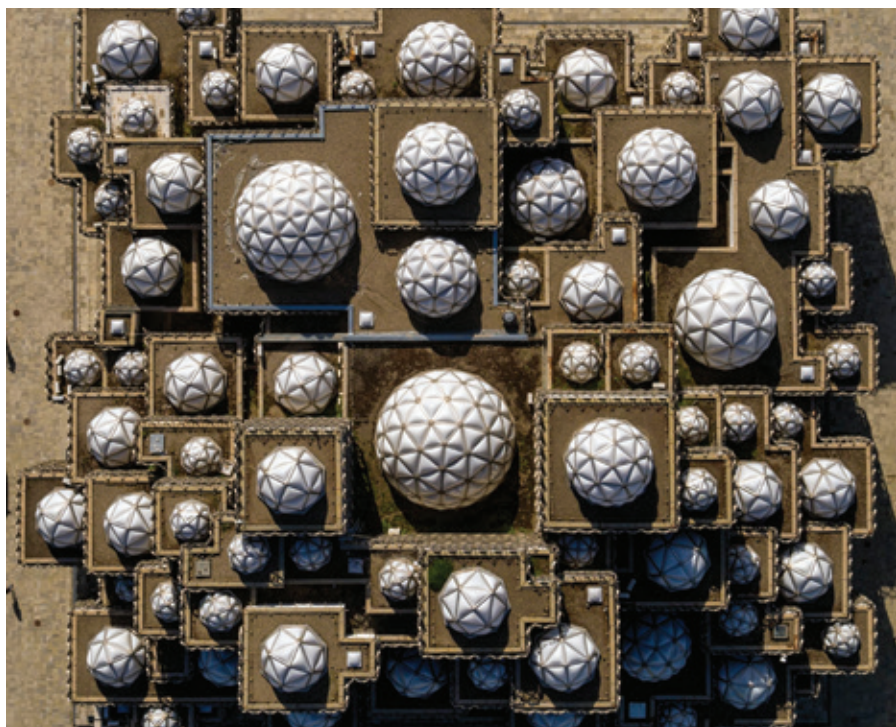
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Membership of international organizations remains a strategic interest for Kosovo. The rationale is two-fold: on one hand this will strengthen the international recognition of Kosovo as a state, while on the other hand Kosovo wants to contribute constructively in the international arena.

The Republic of Kosovo is a member of more than eighty international organizations. These are regional, conventions, and other multilateral mechanisms. Kosovo is also a member of more than thirty sports organizations. Kosovo has also become a full sover-

ign member of international agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and other international bodies such as the International Olympic Committee, FIFA and the Union of European Football Associations, UEFA.

In 2022 Kosovo has officially applied for membership in the Council of Europe. On a larger scale, it is the objective of Kosovo to become a member of the United Nations, EU, Interpol and other important European and global organizations.



## Public diplomacy

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In today`s world, technology changes and economic development suggest an implementation of an active public diplomacy. As a result, Kosovo, introduced public diplomacy as an important instrument of foreign policy.

Through implementing the principle of dialogue, Kosovo public diplomacy aims to spread sincere and trustworthy information about Kosovo. Kosovo foreign policy is interested in advancing its national interests through events, activities and actions, both

locally and internationally, which go beyond the classic diplomacy of verbal notes.

Since declaring its independence, Kosovo public diplomacy has been used to find and develop routes to build the nation`s branding and image. Promotion of tourism and exports (products and services), government policies, and attracting foreign investment are among the key arenas where Kosovo public diplomacy has been focused, as well as in cultural diplomacy in the fields of arts and science and sports.

# Economic diplomacy

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Economic development is among the top priorities of the Republic of Kosovo. For many years, promoting economic interests has been among the top strategic objectives of Kosovo's foreign policy. Kosovo economic diplomacy aims to integrate Kosovo into the markets of developing countries, with participation in international economic and financial organizations, encouragement to invest in Kosovo, and increased exports of Kosovan products.

The free market economy is the foundation for the economic development and the welfare of businesses in Kosovo. Through economic diplomacy, Kosovo aims to inter-

nationalize Kosovan businesses and attract foreign investment. Through its economic diplomacy, Kosovo's foreign policy has aimed at creating a favourable framework for both domestic and international companies to do business. In this context, strengthening the cooperation with the EU to promote the interests of Kosovo's businesses remains at the focus of Kosovo's economic diplomacy initiatives and activities.

Finally, economic diplomacy is being used in conjunction with public diplomacy as a successful tool in developing Kosovo's national branding as a good place to be and to invest.

# Digital diplomacy

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Digital diplomacy is among the priorities of Kosovo diplomacy. It is an instrument and strategy for strengthening Kosovo's overall online presence. This strategy encompasses a comprehensive and diversified

portfolio of initiatives. It is Kosovo's aim to become recognized as a leading country in the application of digital technology in all foreign affairs activities and activities.

# BUSINESS AND THE ECONOMY

by Naim Huruglica, MBA

*Senior business consultant and lecturer*



Kosovo is a transit point between Balkan countries. The fundamental values of doing business in Kosovo are those of the competitive and free market, where Kosovans and foreigners have the same rights to own businesses and property, and they are treated as equal entities.

## Legislative framework for doing business in Kosovo

Kosovo is a parliamentary democracy and its core values are derived from its constitution. Based on the constitution, foreigners have the right to operate and open busi-

nesses in Kosovo and they enjoy the same treatment as Kosovo citizens. In accordance with the constitution and national legislation, no person can be deprived of their

property or any of the rights which derive from it. Foreign investors can operate businesses and own property in Kosovo according to the legislation in force.

The Law on Business Organizations is the primary legal act that regulates businesses and their operations in Kosovo. It defines company types, as well as the procedures and regulations for their incorporation and operations.

According to the Law on Business Organizations, companies can be registered as separate legal entities that operate independently with corporate shields. The law recognizes nine different types of businesses:

1. Individual business.
2. General partnership.
3. Partnership.
4. Limited Liability Company (L.L.C.).
5. Joint Stock Company (J.S.C.).
6. Foreign Company.
7. Socially owned enterprise.
8. Public enterprise.
9. Agricultural cooperative.

Based on the Law on Business Organizations, the central authority for business registration is the Kosovo Business Registration Agency (KBRA). This agency is responsible for all registration procedures for opening a company in Kosovo. Registration can be conducted electronically or in person, and registration can take place at the main office in Prishtina/Pristina or at the offices of any municipality in Kosovo, in each of which KBRA has its own offices.

Kosovo has introduced a unique individual business registration number which simplifies the registration process and avoids the need for further registration with the tax authorities.

Kosovo has adopted two key laws regarding investments: the Law on Foreign Investment and the Law on Strategic Investments.

According to the **Law on Foreign Investment**, the Republic of Kosovo treats foreign investors equally, irrespective of their nationality, origin, residence, the place where the business was established, or its management. Foreign investors and their investments have rights and obligations which are the same as those of the citizens of Kosovo, in accordance with the country's applicable laws.

The **Law on Strategic Investments** allows investors to accelerate the registration procedures for investments of national and strategic interests. This law identifies specific conditions (the value of the investment, creation of new jobs, etc.) that foreign investments need to fulfil in order to be classified as a strategic investment. Once a foreign investor is qualified as a strategic investor, they are entitled to direct negotiation with the government with the aim of facilitating the implementation of a project. The government is determined to expand the existing Industrial Development Zones but is also working on opening new Zones. Foreign investors enjoy benefits in these zones such as symbolic fee leasing of space, infrastructure, and utilities.

# Taxes

Kosovo has established a fiscal system based on EU experiences and best practices in order to have fiscal policies and laws as closely as possible aligned to those of the

EU. There are several taxes in Kosovo, such as Value Added Tax, income tax, corporate tax, and property tax. There are three entities that collect taxes in Kosovo:

Tax type	Tax collector
Value Added Tax (VAT) Personal income tax Corporate tax Pension	Tax Administration of Kosovo
Customs tax Excise VAT on import	Kosovo Customs
Property tax	Local municipal authorities

Tax rates are the lowest in Europe. Corporate tax is at a flat rate of 10% while income tax starts at 0% for incomes up to 900 euros annually and ends at 10% for incomes over 5,400 euros annually. Pension contributions are 10%, 5% paid by the employee,

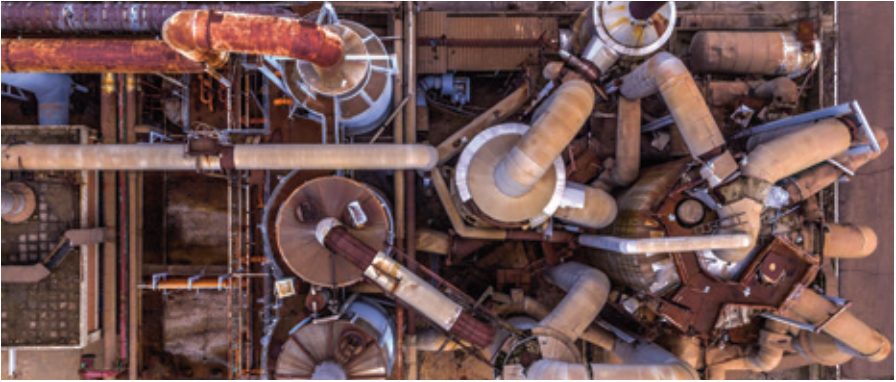
and the other 5% by the employer.

Kosovo is the only country in Europe with a 0% dividend tax rate, and most raw materials, equipment and machinery are customs- and VAT-exempted.

Tax type	Tax collector
Value Added Tax (VAT)	General rate 18%, preferential rate 0% and 8%
Corporate tax	10%
Property tax	0.15 - 0.2%
Personal income tax	0 - 10%
Dividend tax	0%







## Kosovo's economy

Kosovo suffered from the economic damage caused by the war in 1999. Over the last decade, Kosovo has been developing steadily, with the greatest contribution from the services, agriculture, and financial sectors. Kosovo's GDP growth rate in the past 10 years has been over 3.5% on average, with fiscal discipline as established by international financial institutions.

*The following are important features of the Kosovan economy:*

- 1.** Kosovo has the lowest public debt in Europe, which accounts for around 25.4% of GDP.
- 2.** Kosovo has adopted the euro as its currency, which has avoided the risk of currency fluctuation and attracted more foreign investments.
- 3.** Kosovo's large diaspora in western European countries has contributed significantly by sending remittances, enabling an inflow of cash and goods into the economy.
- 4.** Kosovo has a young population that represents great potential for labour. Kosovo's youth is a potential source of human capital for European companies that operate in the Balkans.
- 5.** The GDP of Kosovo is 8.59 billion EURO, as of 2022.
- 6.** The unemployment rate in Kosovo is around 19%.
- 7.** Kosovo mostly trades with the countries of the region and countries of the European Union. Kosovo is part of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and since 2016 it has started implementing the Stabilization Association Agreement with the EU, which enables the export of Kosovan products to these countries without taxes. Kosovo has signed free trade agreements with Great Britain and Turkey as well and enjoys free access to the markets of Japan, Norway, Switzerland, and the USA due to the preferential trade treatment that these countries offer Kosovo's products.

# THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

by Serbeze Haxhijaj

*Journalist*



## Introduction

As in every sphere of its political and social development, Kosovo has a short history of media pluralism. Until July 1990, Kosovo had one state-owned broadcaster, Radio Television of Pristina (RTP), one daily newspaper, *Rilindja*, as well as some weekly and monthly magazines. In summer 1990, the Yugoslav regime imposed its administra-

tion on Kosovo's media outlets by expelling all Kosovo Albanian workers who did not accept censorship measures. An information black-out prevailed in Kosovo until the end of the war in terms of electronic media. Immediately after the war, in September 1999, the United Nations administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) established the public

broadcaster, Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK), while two private-owned broadcasters, RTV21 and KTV, were established one year later. Nowadays, there are more than 450 media outlets in Kosovo. The number of journalists employed is unknown as many media outlets do not provide working contracts to their employees, while the main organization for journalists, the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK) counts more than 400 members on its register.

The Kosovo media market is very small, but there is a large number of media out-

lets operating within this small market, although many of them operate with a small staff. Studies show that incomes from state institutions' advertisements are the main financial source for many news portals, while private advertising power is small and concentrated in a limited number of media outlets.

The pluralism of Kosovo media includes around 30 TV channels, more than 120 radio stations, 4 daily newspapers and around 300 news portals.

## The public broadcaster - Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK)

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Established in September 1999, Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) operates with four TV channels, with RTK1 serving as broadcaster for a general Albanian audience, RTK2 as a channel for minority communities, RTK3 as a news channel and RTK4 focusing mainly on education and culture. There are plans to establish another channel which would

be focused mainly on following the parliament's work, but this is yet to materialize. With more than 900 employees, in 2019, RTK operated with a budget of 11 200 000 euros allocated from Kosovo's budget. Since 2010, RTK has been financed directly from the Kosovo budget although approval is awaited of a new law which is being drafted.

## Private national terrestrial TV stations

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There are only three TV stations in Kosovo with terrestrial licenses to broadcast at national level via terrestrial signal: RTK, KTV and TV21, all broadcasting in Albanian. While RTK is mainly financed from the Kosovo budget with more than 11 million euros in 2019, the other two TV channels are

mainly dependent on advertisements, with lower annual budgets because there are no subsidies from the government. All three terrestrial broadcaster have relatively good coverage of Kosovo territory with just some remote mountainous areas facing difficulties getting the signal.



## Private national TV stations that broadcast via satellite

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KTV and TV21 are the only two of Kosovo's private national TV channels that broadcast via satellite but with the swift expansion

of the cable network in Kosovo, their main audience has remained in the diaspora.

## Regional TV stations

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In Kosovo, this kind of TV channel has lost its meaning with the swift expansion of the cable network. In the early 2000s, the Independent Media Commission issued several licenses for regional TV channels with territorial

expansion in municipalities which applied. Most of them are now part of the cable network platform and can be watched all over Kosovo where these operators are licensed to operate.

## Local radio stations

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There are seven national, seven regional, more than eighty local and a handful of internet-based radio stations. There are no figures about their incomes, but they are

mostly based on advertisements and provide programmes for the audiences of all communities living in Kosovo.

## Online media

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There are around 300 news portals operating in Kosovo, with most of them having begun operation in the last five years when internet access became omnipresent among readers. Most online media publish

informative content while many of them are understaffed and republish stories from each other without any control of the content, focusing mainly on politics, sports, and entertainment (showbiz).

## Regulation in the media sector in Kosovo

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There is no media law in Kosovo, although in 2013 the Kosovo parliament approved a law on the protection of journalists' sources which allows journalists to remain silent regarding their sources of information, with some specific exceptions.

However, there are some mechanisms that deal with media regulation and self-regulation. Established in 2005, the Independent Media Commission (IMC) functions as an independent body and is responsible for the regulation, management, and oversight of the broadcasting frequency spectrum in Kosovo. On the other hand, print and online media are not regulated by law or any

oversight body while the Press Council of Kosovo operates as a self-regulatory body founded for and by the print media sector in Kosovo. Established in 2005 with the help of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, its mission is based on the principles of the Press Code of Kosovo.

Furthermore, the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AGK) is a non-governmental organization with the mission of promoting, encouraging, and improving quality and open journalism in Kosovo, as well as improving the position of journalists in general in Kosovo society. The AGK is open to membership for any journalist in Kosovo.

# CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

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by Florina Duli

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*Country Director-Terre des Hommes, Kosovo*

*Member of the Kosovo Stability Initiative Board of Directors*



Civil society in the Republic of Kosovo is an essential part of the country's democratic fabric and is supported by Article 44 of the Kosovo Constitution and the Law No. 06/L-043 on Freedom of Association and Registration in NGOs, which guarantee freedom of association in Kosovo. This freedom enables citizens to participate in a range of organized forms of democratic action, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, labour unions, people's movements, faith-based organi-

zations, professional associations, foundations, think tanks, charitable organizations, and other not-for-profit organizations.

NGOs in Kosovo can be formally registered as foundations, associations or think tanks, but the legal system also enables the functioning of non-registered, ad hoc, or long-term issue-based groups. This trend in the establishment of such groups is growing, and they include environment protection groups, gender equality groups, and is-

sue-based coalitions. The legal framework of Kosovo also guarantees the right to association into Labour Unions, as per Article 44.2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and Law No. 04/L-011 on Organizing Trade Unions in Kosovo. Although membership in labour unions is not mandatory, the presence of labour unions is more prevalent in the public sector than in the private sector.

The positive public image of NGOs in Kosovo is a testament to the important role they have played in promoting human rights, providing essential services, and empowering communities during the '90s when public services were denied to most Kosovo Albanians and when violation of their human rights were widespread.

Their legacy has contributed to the development of a vibrant civil society sector in Kosovo, which is essential for the long-term development of the country. Civil society organizations in Kosovo cover a wide range of activities, including policy and governance, service delivery, human rights, health care and services, education, infrastructure and economic development, entrepreneurship, initiatives protecting the environment, culture, youth, sports, innovation, and many others. Activism and citizen protests, marches, and rallies are commonplace in Kosovo, with the right to protest and to assemble guaranteed by the Kosovo Constitution.

Over the last two decades, around 10,000 NGOs have registered in Kosovo, with around 3,000 being functional and active. However, most NGOs, with a degree of ex-

ception for licensed service providers, are dependent on international donors and foundations. At times, this dependence on donor funding, especially public bilateral donors, has weakened their voice or had a co-opting effect on them.

To promote cooperation between the government and civil society, the Government of Kosovo has developed its second mid-term Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society 2019-2023. The aim of this strategy is to create a more enabling legal, institutional, and financial framework for the cooperation between government and civil society, empower civil society to participate in the policy-making process, deliver better quality services and ensure unbiased monitoring of policy implementation. However, local philanthropy is not yet developed in Kosovo.

The CSO Sustainability Index is an annual assessment of the sustainability of civil society organizations in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, in which Kosovo is included since 2001. In the most recent CSO Sustainability Index (for January 2020 to February 2021) Kosovo received an overall score of 5.5 out of 7, indicating relatively high conducive legal environment, organizational capacity, and public image for civil society organizations in the country.

In conclusion, the Republic of Kosovo has demonstrated a high level of political will to ensure that CSOs at their broader meaning, are able to operate independently by enacting a highly conducive legal and regulatory framework, which in turn requires a high



degree of transparency and accountability of registered NGOs. On the other hand, the civil society sector, undoubtedly plays a critical role in promoting democratic values, ensuring human rights and empowering citizens to participate in decision-making

processes. However, the dependence on international donors and foundations highlights the need for the development of local philanthropy to ensure full independence and sustainability of civil society organizations in Kosovo.



# MIGRATION

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*by Tahir Latifi*

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*Professor of anthropology*



Kosovo households have been dependent on remittances from family members living and working abroad since the 1960s, when the first wave of unskilled workers migrated to Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, and Scandinavian countries, as guest workers occupied primarily in unqualified jobs.

This situation continued until the 1980s when a new phase of migrations began after Tito's death and Kosovo-Albanians demonstrations in 1981. Political turmoil caused a new wave of migrants which, unlike the first wave, included migrants from urban areas, students, educated and skilled workers. Because many of them had taken part in, or in some way had supported the 1981 demonstrations, many of them became targets of political persecution and

had been arrested by the Yugoslav regime. In order to avoid or escape political persecution, these people migrated to western countries. Thus, besides the economic reasons which were distinctive for the first wave of migrants, many of these emigrants left the country for political reasons.

The third wave of migration began at the outset of the 1990s. In March 1989 the Serbian regime abolished Kosovo's autonomy, and in the aftermath the repressive regime of Slobodan Milošević initiated the forced mass dismissal of hundreds of thousands of Kosovo-Albanians from their workplaces. Having no chance of finding another job, many of those who were dismissed from their jobs migrated to western and northern European countries, and even to the USA, Canada and

Australia. Many of them were young, and their aim was not only to find a better life and work there, but also to escape recruitment in the Yugoslav (Serbian-dominated) army just as war was beginning in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This wave escalated in 1998-1999 during the war in Kosovo. This was the time of the exodus (fourth wave) when about 1 million Kosovo-Albanians were displaced from their homes. About 800,000 were displaced to Albania and North Macedonia, and the rest within Kosovo. Many of those who fled to Albania and Macedonia subsequently migrated to Western countries.

The fifth wave started after the end of 1998-1999 war, from 2000 until present. Now, the main reasons for migration were different: reuniting families, as well as unemployment and poverty.

Recent years have marked an increasing intensity of migration, especially between the end of 2014 and spring 2015. Over this period, more than 119,000 people migrated. In general, from 2013 to 2021 around 267,569 people have migrated abroad, while having only 71,983 immigrants, meaning a net migration of 217,605 inhabitants (table 1).

International migration 2013-2021			
Years	Emigration	Immigration	Net migration
2013	-	-	-16.381
2014	45.333	5.724	-39.609
2015	74.434	18.862	-55.572
2016	22.012	13.072	-8.940
2017	11.263	5.832	-5.431
2018	28.164	6.762	-21.402
2019	34.911	6.066	-28.845
2020	8.724	11.543	2.819
2021	42.728	4.122	-38.606
<b>Total</b>	<b>267.569</b>	<b>71.983</b>	<b>217.605</b>

**TABLE 1.** *International migration 2013-2021. Source: KAS, Population assessments in the years 2013-2021.*

From 1969 to 2011, the number of emigrants of Kosovo descent was estimated to be 703,978. Previously it was estimated that one third of Kosovo's population lived abroad, but due to the increasing number

of migrants in these last years, it seems that numbers go beyond that estimate. Based on 2011 census data, the preferred country for migration was Germany, followed by Switzerland (see Table 2).

Country	Percentage
Germany	35.25
Switzerland	22.94
Italy	7.26
Austria	5.61
Sweden	5.14
USA	3.53
France	3.25
England	2.79
Belgium	2.07
Slovenia	1.78
Other	10.38

**TABLE 2.** Percentage of Kosovo migrants according to leading countries of destination. Census 2011. Source. Kosovan Migration (KAS 2014)

Although more than a decade has passed since the last census, the leading countries of migrant destinations are almost the same. Based on the total number of Schen-

gen visas issued for Kosovans in the years 2013-2017, it seems that Germany and Switzerland are still the preferred countries for migration (see Table 3).

Country	Number of issued visas
Germany	90 137
Switzerland	81 552
Italy	21 040
Greece	21 575
Slovenia	11 907
Hungary	9 043
Other countries	21 423
<b>Total</b>	<b>256 677</b>

**TABLE 3.** Statistics for Schengen Visas (2013-2017). Source: Enhanced migration profile 2013-2017

It should be mentioned that the number of visas issued is not only for those who emigrated to these countries, but also those

who got other types of visas, such as for business, touristic and other purposes



# KOSOVO'S CONNECTION WITH ITS DIASPORA AND DIASPORA POTENTIAL

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*by Liza Gashi*

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*Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, Republic of Kosovo*



Kosovo's Diaspora is one of the most vibrant and dynamic aspects of our country, with deep connections to their homeland spanning generations. With significant community members residing in countries such as Germany, Switzerland, the United States, and beyond, our diverse Diasporic communities have the potential to be a driving force for Kosovo's growth in numer-

ous fields, including diplomacy, arts, sports, business, and academia.

Today, it is estimated that Kosovo's Diaspora is a community of over a million people, contributing to the global community with their unique talents and perspectives. In the case of Kosovo, studies suggest that every third household in Kosovo has at least



one family member living abroad. Our Diaspora has continued to play a crucial role in representing the country on the international stage, with notable figures such as pop stars Rita Ora and Dua Lipa and footballers Granit Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri among many others, making their mark. The connections between Kosovo and Diaspora are of immense importance. Our Diaspora is a critical source of financial support, knowledge and skills transfer, cultural preservation, and advocacy efforts, contributing to Kosovo's economic, social, and cultural development. The strong bond between Kosovo and Diaspora is a valuable asset that should be nurtured and leveraged to

benefit Kosovo's current and future generations.

As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD), we recognize the importance of nurturing these connections, operating under our citizen diplomacy mantra "Every Citizen, a Diplomat." To the MFAD, every Diaspora member plays an important part in Kosovo's development. To fully grasp the potential of the Diaspora, we should first recognize the vital role our Diaspora has played during our history, but also be aware of the future developments and how connections between Kosovo and Diaspora can be nurtured.

Our Diaspora has been a significant source of financial support for Kosovo's economic growth throughout history. Remittances from Diaspora members have played a crucial role in improving the living standards of families in Kosovo but have also been a vital source to survive during Serbia's genocidal regime, especially during the 1990s.

Our Diaspora's contributions have driven economic development and reduced Kosovo's poverty. In recent history, many of our Diaspora have also invested in Kosovo, providing capital and expertise for entrepreneurial ventures, creating employment opportunities, and stimulating economic growth.

We see our Diaspora as a bridge for transferring knowledge and skills between Kosovo and the countries where Diaspora members reside. Diaspora members often acquire education, expertise, and professional experience in their host countries, which can be utilized to benefit Kosovo. They bring back valuable knowledge, skills, and best practices, which can be shared with local institutions, businesses, and communities to enhance education, healthcare, technology, and other sectors. As MFAD, in 2022, we launched the Citizen Diplomacy Fellowship, directly engaging young professional Diaspora members in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora for six months to transfer knowledge and skills and bring Diaspora perspectives into the policy-making process.

Our "Every citizen, a diplomat" approach sees Diaspora as a vital role in preserving and promoting Kosovo's rich cultural heri-



tage. Our Diaspora members actively preserve Kosovo traditions, language, arts, and customs abroad and share them with the younger generations of Kosovan Diaspora members. This helps to maintain a strong cultural identity among our Diaspora living abroad and fosters a sense of pride and belonging to the homeland. Furthermore, our Diaspora serves as cultural ambassadors, promoting Kosovo's diverse culture and history globally, which enhances its international visibility and reputation.

But to fully harness the potential of our Diaspora, we as the MFAD are finalizing a new Law on Diaspora and are drafting a new Diaspora Strategy that ingrains all these elements of our Diaspora into a working mechanism that can meaningfully engage Diaspora in Kosovo's future path. Through improving the legal framework of Diaspora engagement, we ensure that the full potential of the Diaspora for the development of Kosovo can be nurtured, and cooperation between Kosovo and Diaspora can flourish.

# THE IMPERMANENCE OF A PERMANENT PEACE

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*by Dritan Dragusha*

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*Journalist, author and TV Host of "Prizma"*



Under the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, as the highest legal act in the country, specifically Article 8, the Republic of Kosovo is a secular state, neutral in matters of religious belief, while Article 9 ensures the preservation and protection of its cultural and religious heritage. In addition to such constitutional norms, the Republic of Kosovo has also incorporated documents and conventions of a universal character guaranteeing freedoms and the right to religion, belief and free expression. Thus, on this legal basis, we can say that Kosovo has

a liberal constitutional regulation in relation to the various religious denominations that coexist in our society. What characterizes Kosovo in this regard is the coexistence of the great monotheistic religions. The vast majority of Kosovans are Muslim, with much smaller groups of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. At the same time, there are groups of other faiths, as well as atheists.

A number of different ethnic groups, such as Albanians, Ashkali, Bosnians, Croats,



Egyptians, Gorani, Montenegrins, Roma, Serbs, Turks, etc., live in Kosovo, and as a result the Republic of Kosovo, through its constitution, presents the state of Kosovo and its society as a multiethnic society in Article 3 [Equality before the Law], Point 1. All these social stratifications have historically coexisted in tolerance. Of course, Kosovan society is not static; it is very dynamic and sporadically there have been isolated disagreements and conflicts, which have occurred mainly as a result of external influences, rather than due to any internal hatred.

Given that geographically the Republic of Kosovo lies on the edge of Southeast Europe, this area has often been the theatre of various clashes. Perhaps not coincidentally, historians point out that this geographical area is also the boundary between the East and the West. We even encounter the expressions of these two cultures (Western and Eastern) in the architecture still standing in these spaces. We have religious sites, such as mosques, hammams and residential houses from the Ottoman period, but we also have Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox sites, all the way from Roman times to the Austro-Hungarian period. It should not be forgotten that the people who lived on these lands in antiquity were pagan societies, and even today there are many symbols or social events that still carry elements of paganism, and perhaps this is the reason for such interfaith tolerance.

Based on 2017 statistics, Kosovo has 800 mosques, 150 Orthodox churches, 50 Roman Catholic churches, and 24 Protestant

churches. There are also the traces of a variety of religions and their number and diversity make Kosovan society very attractive, and Kosovo a very interesting place. It is of interest to note that in Kosovo the various religious holidays are observed ceremonially and joyously not only by the clergy, but also across Kosovan society. Regardless of which religion they belong to, during the holidays people in Kosovo congratulate each other and express solidarity.

However, Kosovo and its people are not immune to developments taking place in Europe and beyond. Therefore, current events fuelled by religion and radicalism, and the resulting rise of the extreme right and other segregating expressions, have had and still have a great impact on Kosovan society. In addition, Kosovan society is still isolated (for various political reasons, both external and internal), and Kosovans enjoy little freedom of movement, as Kosovo does not yet have visa liberalization, and this creates fertile ground for religious ideologies and destructive politics to indoctrinate people, especially young people. Thus, peace and tolerance are not to be taken for granted, but they must be permanently cultivated, and this is the responsibility of every individual, every religion, every politician and political party. Every society has a responsibility too, because, as we have seen in recent years, the negative events that take place in a given country or society will not necessarily affect other countries or societies. Therefore, living for peace and in peace requires daily work. The day we stop working on this will be the last day of peace and the beginning of a negative period for everyone.



# KOSOVO AS A COUNTRY OF RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE

*Nita Luci*

*Ass. Prof. Department of Anthropology, University of Prishtina/Pristina / Co-Chair University Program for Gender Studies and Research (on leave)*

*Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the Kingdom of Norway*



Kosovo has rich cultural heritage that not only dates to prehistoric times, but is found expressed in creative, dynamic and diverse contemporary socio-cultural practices and locations. The architectural, aesthetic, and historical tangible and intangible heritage found throughout Kosovo, speak to its complex history, large-scale political and

cultural transformations, and an ongoing and vigorous interest by citizens to engage with spaces of heritage.

The past thirty years, first of violence and dislocation, but also abounding creative production, followed by state-building and international interventions, have left last-

ing marks on Kosovo's cultural heritage. Whereas many sites of cultural heritage have fallen into disarray, and digitization is in its infancy, governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations and independent citizen actions have begun vying for increased preservation and education. In 2017, the Kosovo Government adopted a ten-year National Strategy on Cultural Heritage that seeks to preserve and promote cultural heritage on the basis of sustainable economic, social and cultural development. Organizations such as Cultural Heritage Without Borders in Kosovo continue restoration and engagement of the public in support of rights to cultural heritage and creative industry; it also includes Heritage Space which enables artists and professionals in the field of culture, creative industries, and digital humanities to work in the preservation of cultural heritage through research, documentation and interpretation. Others, such as Ec Ma Ndryshe, continue to monitor, report and define possibilities for urban planning that places citizens and cultural and natural heritage at the centre.

At the same time, archaeologists and scholars, but also artists and activists, research, collect, disseminate, archive, and engage through traditional methods and new digital technologies to make cultural heritage relevant to the public interest. A short and in no way all-encompassing list includes Oral History Kosovo – online collection of life stories intersecting with the broader history of Kosovo and the world; the Rilindja Archive – a digital collection of Kosovo's first daily newspaper; the Vushtrri Fortress

– restoration of the archaeological site dating to the seventh century; the Harilaq Fortress – excavation of a 4-6th century site; the Museum of Education – an online platform of 1990s segregated parallel education; Lirindja magazine – 1980s BOOM concerts showcasing part of Kosovo's rock music heritage, and most recently a project in Mitrovica seeking to uncover more about Kosovo industrial heritage. Newer spaces such as Foundation 17, Space Syntax and Centre for Narrative Practice work at the intersection of urban heritage, pedagogy, research and artistic expression to engendering new dynamic heritage practices.

Perhaps the most ubiquitous institution for its role in the preservation, protection and presentation of cultural heritage is the National Museum of Kosovo, located in the capital, Prishtina/Pristina. Established in 1949 and housed in a late nineteenth-century building of Austro-Hungarian architecture, the National Museum has a collection of over 50 000 artefacts in its archaeological, historical, ethnographic, and nature pavilions. A significant part of the museum's collection, over 2000 artefacts (archaeological and cultural/ historical) from the Kosovo's Archaeological Treasure exhibition, is currently kept illegally at the National and Ethnological Museums in Belgrade. Adjacent to the National Museum is the Archaeological Park (or Lapidarium) which showcases antiquities in its permanent exhibition and includes a small amphitheatre and exhibition space for cultural and educational activities, especially catering to youth and children. Another part of the museum complex is the Ethnological Museum Emin Gjiku. Recent-

ly listed among the most interesting city museums in Europe it offers a permanent exhibition that fuses the lived and experiential with the materiality of culture. Located in two preserved Ottoman houses from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the museum exhibition is built around the themes of birth, life, and death, where the beliefs and values that have guided cultural practices and rituals are animated in the carefully curated narrative of the museum.

The Ulpiana Archaeological Park – among hundreds of archaeological sites dating to the stone and iron ages, and more visible in the Ancient Greek, Roman, and Byzantine localities – is one of the most impressive and better restored archaeological sites in Kosovo. Just last year a joint Kosovan and French team uncovered a 6<sup>th</sup> century church with a 75 meter perimeter and an equally impressive mosaic. For over sixty years, Ulpiana has been a location of excavations and study by local and international scholars and students, and more recently the site has opened to the public. Showing traces of human habitation since the Neolithic continuing to the Bronze and Iron Age, Ulpiana became an urbanized centre several decades after the invasion of the Dardanian Kingdom by the Romans at the end of the first century AD. The urbanized and fortified city of Ulpiana was founded and named by the Roman Emperor Marcus ULPIUS Traianus (98-117), when it also gained the status of a Municipal (Municipium Ulpianum). It reached the height of its development between the third and fourth centuries AD, transforming into a significant political, economic and cultural centre.

Municipium Ulpiana Splendidissima was characterized by a network of roads - *Cardo Maximus* and *Decumanus* - an orthogonal urban system, water supply, residential buildings and public, sacral, profane and utilitarian structures. It was a centre of metallurgical, artisanal, trade and agricultural importance during the first five centuries of the first millennium, and an important religious centre during the rule of the emperor Justinian in the sixth century when it was rebuilt and renamed *Justiniana Secunda*. During the period of Roman dominion (first to fourth century AD) and Byzantine rule (fourth to sixth century AD) Ulpiana was one of the main connecting centres between Constantinople and Rome, intersecting roads that connected the Adriatic Sea with the Aegean and indirectly the Black Sea. In 1993, evidence of trade extending to Haifa (Caesarea) in Israel was found in lead ingots (rods) with the engraving *Met(alli) Dard(anici)* believed to be from the Ulpiana mines.

Early Christian, Medieval and Ottoman heritage abounds throughout Kosovo. Such is the Gračanica/Gračanica Monastery, an Orthodox monastery built by King Stefan Milutin in 1321, on the ruins of a sixth-century basilica. In 2006 it was placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, and as an extension of the Decan Monastery site. In Prizren, the Our Lady of Ljevis church is located in the city's historical centre. It was rebuilt by King Milutin in 1306/7 but it is assumed that the church was built over a fifth-sixth century early Christian church and Byzantine Basilica from the ninth century. After the fall of Prizren to the Ottoman Empire in 1455, it was renamed



as the Juma Mosque and given the status of mosque by Sultan Mehmet II.

Kosovo's cultural-religious heritage is perhaps most widely known as a site of political tensions, often overshadowing the rich social history, artistic and spiritual relevance of these sites to various communities. Currently there are almost 2000 heritage sites under temporary protection in Kosovo and only 23 under permanent protection, a list that is overseen by the Kosovo Council for Cultural Heritage. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Culture and Cultural Heritage is engaged in support of protection and restoration measures, with increasing attention to an integrated approach that joins preservation with the potential for sustainable tourism.

In recent years, independent and civil society initiatives have also turned to preserving Kosovo's more recent historical heritage. Artistic and multi-media productions surrounding modernist and socialist architecture and art, as well as 1990s social, cultural and political activism and resistance, have animated the interest of local and international scholars and publics. This interest has in part been sparked by continued failures to protect, or projects that undermined the architectural and aesthetic, as well as urban, creation of the socialist period, as well as the legacy of the 1990s peaceful civic resistance in Kosovo. Specifically, several buildings characterized by their brutalist and socialist-realist aesthetics have been lost, such as the façade of the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering, designed by Slovenian architect Edvard



Ravinkar; the Rilindja (publishing house) building, designed by Georgi Konstantinovski; and the Kosovo Assembly building, which was designed by Juraj Naidhardt, Le Corbusier's assistant. However, three cinemas, relevant to the artistic and cultural memory of the cities in which they are located, are now under protection and run independently in collaboration with local public institutions. Kino Armata, located in the centre of Prishtina/Pristina, adjacent to what was initially the administrative building of the Yugoslav Army, followed by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo administration in the early 2000s, hosts an artistic and cultural program including film screenings. Kino Jusuf Gërvalla, in Peja/Peć, and Cinema Lumbardhi, located in the historic centre of Prizren, are both movie theatres run by CSOs which together

with citizens prevented municipal plans for demolition and repurposing. Both are used for varied cultural, artistic and public events, and serve as spaces that can create new and inclusive sites for heritage protection and promotion.

Despite the continued politicization of heritage, or perhaps because of it, strides have been made to protect as well as expand the scope of cultural heritage protection and promotion. While Kosovo faces many challenges in bringing to life its heritage strategy and would be greatly aided if its UNESCO membership application were to be supported, Kosovo citizens, and its institutions, continue to engage and commit to inclusive, participatory, and creative solutions for Kosovo's rich cultural heritage.

# CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

*by Arbnora Dushi*

*Folklore scholar, Institute of Albanology, Prishtina / Pristina*



In addition to institutional and architectural sites, Kosovo's rich cultural heritage is also manifested through oral traditions, ritual practices, traditional costumes, and other cultural activities whose practice has given them the status of custom and traditions.

One of Kosovo's oldest and most characteristic traditions is warm and generous hospitality to guests and friends. The roots of this tradition are ancient, embedded in the age-old adage, 'The house of the Albanian belongs to God, the guest, and the master

of the house', and it continues to characterize the people of Kosovo even today. Even if tourists arrive with skepticism on their first visit, they always leave with the desire to come back again, because of the warm and generous hospitality they have received from local people. Part of this hospitality is the tradition of preparing food and a rich menu, which -despite the great similarities with Balkan and oriental cuisine - is also known for typical local recipes.

**Weddings** continue to be the mostly ceremonial family act, where the tradition of the



groom going to his bride's home to take her away, accompanied by music and dances and many guests rejoicing and dancing, is a custom that continues to be practiced in Kosovo.

Folk songs always accompany traditional ceremonies. This folkloric heritage includes **epic songs**, but also **ballads** which are still sung in certain ethno-cultural areas. The Rugova Gorge near Peja stands out; there, the traditional practice of playing the **lahuta** (single-stringed musical instrument always accompanied by singing) is still kept alive. The **çifteli** (two-stringed instrument) is still used to sing many folk songs dedicated to heroes and national historical events.

The extremely diverse **traditional costumes** specific to particular areas in Kosovo, the typical folk songs and dances of the area, but also performances of traditional rituals, are preserved and cultivated today through **folklore festivals**, which have already gained the status of traditional events. The most renowned are the **Drenas Festival**, which is organized every four years, the **Has Festival**, which is organized every year at the start of May, and the **Anadrina Festival**. Performing in these festivals are professional groups but also virtuosos and amateurs, who compete with high-quality performances of singing, dancing, and the presentation of folk costumes.

A new type of festival in Kosovo is **Etno-Fest**, which is an outdoor annual event that for a decade now has been organized at the end of August in the rural setting of the village of Kukaj. The purpose of organiz-

ing this festival is to preserve tradition, by using a historical setting and restoring the memory of heritage. Soloists and groups from all Albanian lands, including Kosovo, offer popular songs and other performances, exhibitions and handicrafts. Of a similar nature is **Hardh-Fest**, which is related to the tradition of grape harvesting and is organized in Rahovec/Orahovac where there are vineyards and wineries that produce Kosovo's wines.

Being a culturally rich country, Kosovo also has state folk ensembles, such as **The National Ensemble of Song and Dance, 'Sho- ta'**, and the **Rugova Autochthonous Folklore Ensemble**, which have been active for many decades now.

Cultural heritage, folklore, traditions and customs, but also their confrontation with the trends of modernity, are researched and analyzed in research and publishing projects of the **Albanological Institute** in Prishtina/Pristina. This scientific research institution, founded in 1953, has departments of Folklore and Ethnology, which have researched and published several dozen volumes of folklore materials. Through analytical research projects, dozens of monographs and publications related to research on traditional Albanian culture and comparison to other peoples in Kosovo and the Balkans, have also been published. This Institute publishes its annual scientific journal, the **Albanological Research Folklore and Ethnology series**, with papers that analytically address issues from traditional culture.



# FOOD IN KOSOVO

by Arben Zeqiri

*International consultant, global traveller, and full-time foodie*



Food is an essential part of everyday culture in Kosovo. Big family gatherings are a common tradition, and they usually revolve around food with traditional food recipes often passed down through generations. Kosovo is a small country which explains why its food – though it is a big part of everyday life in Kosovo – has not been recognized as one of the mainstream food types, as is the case with Greek, Italian, French, and other cuisines.

Being at the heart of the Balkan peninsula, Kosovo has had its share of different influences from Turkish, Serbian, Austro-Hungarian, Italian, and Greek cuisine. With lots

of fresh produce (which is predominately organic, especially in the countryside), the food is based on fresh vegetables and meat consisting of various stews, salads, but also grilling and baked goodies.

Most people still prefer buying from local farmers markets due to the freshness of the ingredients. When it comes to meat, there are still butchers where most locals in cities prefer to purchase their fresh meat. However, nowadays there are multiple supermarkets (local, Italian, Austrian, etc.) offering a variety of local and international produce, from cheeses, to wines, to spices, etc. as you would find in any other European country.

Dishes vary from lighter during the summer using lots of fresh local produce to rich meat-based stews and pickled vegetables during the colder days of fall and winter with plenty of colours, and taste galore. One of the favourite dishes is roasted and peeled long green peppers, served usually during the summer days when the peppers are at the peak of their freshness. Peppers – which can be either hot, mild or sweet – are sautéed in olive oil or sunflower oil until they start caramelizing a little bit, and can be served either with garlic and parsley; dipped in eggs and flour and pan-fried; or the most common version as a dip called *speca në mazë* made with local cheese (which is similar to young feta, and in certain cases like an older ricotta) and cream. Traditional bread called *pogaçe*, which is flaky and soft, is usually served alongside and used for dipping in the dish and for soaking up all the delicious juices.

**Gjyveç** - or, as it is also known in Albanian, *turli* - is a mix of fresh summer vegetables with tomatoes, peppers, onions, spring onions, leeks, and zucchini which are pan-roasted with black pepper, spices, and paprika, and then baked until soft and caramelized around the edges.

**Pies, (pite or burek; Turkish börek)** are a big part of Kosovo food. Pies come in different shapes and forms and can be found all over the country in bakeries or little shops called *burektore* (a local version of fast food). Pies consist of a flaky dough which is rolled and stretched into multiple layers with either oil or melted butter in between and then can be filled with various fillings. Some of

the favourite pie fillings are spinach and leek (similar to Greek spanakopita); ricotta cheese and cream; pumpkin with cream; cabbage sautéed in milk and cream or sautéed in sunflower oil with paprika and black pepper; minced meat with spices and pepper; potatoes with spices and pepper; yogurt and garlic; and during the winter season pickled cabbage with spices and pepper.

Another delightful traditional pie that is typically prepared at home is known as “përpeç” or “qumështor”. This pie closely resembles a cheese quiche and is made using a delectable blend of eggs, cheese, milk, and cream. The combination of these ingredients results in a delicious and satisfying dish that is sure to delight anyone who tries it.

This list would not be completed without the famous *flija*. The process for cooking *flija* is painstakingly long, but the end result is a delicious dish made from multiple thin layers of batter similar in consistency to crepes, with *kajmak* or cream cheese, and butter in between the layers. Watching the cook prepare *flija* is fascinating. The cook spreads thin strips of batter mix onto a round pan using the spoon starting from the outer edge of the pan towards the middle, leaving small spaces between the strips. The layers are then baked by using a metal dome called a *saç* which is heated using wood and which bakes the layer of strips in less than a minute. Once the layer is baked, the cook will spread a thin layer of cream cheese, milk and butter, and then continue with spreading the next layer of strips, which is then again baked and so al-

ternating between the two until the entire pan is filled with layers of strips. *Flija* is a dish that requires sacrifice, skill and patience - the word itself means 'sacrifice' in Albanian.

Corn is also a common ingredient in many traditional dishes. One such dish is *leqenik*, a pie made with corn flour, milk, cheese, eggs, spinach, spring onions, and/ or leeks, which looks similar to corn bread, but with the added taste of spinach, cheese, and cream. *Kaçamak* is another dish which is similar to Italian polenta. Polenta or corn meal is cooked slowly with milk, cream, butter, and cheese until it is thick in consistency, and it is served hot either as a side dish or on its own with feta cheese crumbled on top.

In recent years, traditional food has made a big comeback in Kosovo, and many restaurants

have started serving traditional dishes that in the past were typical home-made dishes and not usually found in restaurants. Peppers stuffed with minced beef, spices and paprika, and *sarma* cabbage rolls stuffed with minced beef, spices and paprika, are two traditional dishes which are served when the weather gets colder and can also be found throughout the region and all the way to Russia. Stuffed zucchini with minced beef is another dish which is similar in preparation, however usually served during the warmer days when zucchini is fresh.

***Elbasan tavë*** is a dish which was originally invented in Albania but adopted in Kosovo and even in Turkish cuisine. It's a delicious rich dish of either lamb or veal cooked in a traditional clay dish with yogurt, garlic,



spices and cream until the meat is tender, juicy and almost completely falling apart. The tartness of the Greek-style yogurt, and the sweetness of the cream together with the garlic and spices, fills your mouth with flavour, and the aroma coming from the clay dish – which continues to keep the food warm even after it is out of the oven – elevates the whole experience even further.

**Fasule në tavë** is another dish which is served in traditional clay dishes. Beans are cooked over a slow fire with onions, garlic, carrots, spices, black pepper, sweet peppers, and smoked beef jerky (which is locally called *përshut*) until they start caramelizing around the edges of the dish and it is all bubbling. The smokiness of the dried beef together with other spices like black pepper and paprika, and caramelization from the

slow cooking in the oven, makes this dish perfect for the winter season.

**Mantia** is another favourite dish among the local population, served throughout the year, and consisting of phyllo-style pastry spread thin and filled with minced beef, onions, leeks, garlic, spices, and sweet paprika, and then rolled into little parcels which are baked in the oven, and can be served with Greek-style yogurt, garlic, and cucumbers as *tarator* (*tzatziki*), or on their own.

Grilling is a big thing in Kosovo. Dishes like *qebapa*, *qofte*, or the Sharri *qofte* served with *kajmak* (soft cream which has the consistency of cream cheese but is actually thick cream just before it is turned to butter) and cheese, or *suxhuk*, can be found throughout the country in small restaurants called *qe-*





*baptore*, dedicated to grilling. Some of them have been in business for many decades, passing their cooking skills and knowledge from generation to generation. *Qebapa*, or *qofte*, are made of minced beef which is mixed with onions, garlic, and spices, and then divided into small little sausages and cooked slowly over hot coals which also smoke the meat while grilling, giving the meat a delicious smoky, savoury taste and aroma. They are usually served with flat bread called *samun* or *pitalka*, and a mixed salad of tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and feta cheese.

Coffee culture has always been an inherent part of Kosovo society. However, in the last couple of decades, with the opening

of many coffee shops, coffee has become a universal part of Kosovo culture. There are many coffee shops that can be found on almost every corner, and they are meeting points for friends, as well as places to conduct business meetings. Coffee shops serve a variety of coffees, starting with the famous macchiato (Prishtina/Pristina has been voted as the capital of macchiato), cappuccino, café latte, etc. Together with coffee you will find dishes which are typically served for breakfast and/or lunch like *llokuma* (savoury little squares of dough made of yogurt, eggs, milk, and baking soda, fried to perfection, and served with yogurt and feta cheese), or *krofne* (similar to French beignets) covered in a dust of sugar, perfect for a morning or afternoon snack.

# Restaurants worth mentioning in Kosovo:

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## TRADITIONAL FOOD:

**Tiffany** – One of the best restaurants when it comes to traditional food. It has been in business for a very long time and the food is always fresh, delicious, and consistent in quality and taste. There is no menu, however the staff can always help order. Their Elbasan Tavë is the best in the city and their Mantia is delicious and served home-style with plenty of yogurt, which makes the dough flaky and delicious. The tartness of the yogurt cuts the richness of the meat and delivers a perfectly balanced dish.

**Renaissance** – Their tapas-style set menu which consist of various appetizers, home baked bread, salads, different meats, and side dishes with always fresh and seasonal produce, is one of the best in the city. As part of their set menu, they also include drinks local raki and wine. The food is delicious.

**Soma Slow Food** – The farm to table menu features primarily local and regional ingredients. Once you select the main course you also get a selection of eclectic appetizers based on seasonal produce. The restaurant is set in Germia park so away from the hustle-bustle of the city with views of the nearby trees which makes the entire experience even more fun and relaxing.

## INTERNATIONAL FOOD:

**Comandante Marcos Tacos y Tequila** – It is the first and only Mexican restaurant in Kosovo. Always packed with crowds of people, it is a fun restaurant with a lively ambience, beautiful décor and great music that adds to the ambience. Their food is a mix of favourite Mexican dishes which includes tacos, chimichangas, quesadillas, burritos, enchiladas, flautas, and other Mexican style dishes like steaks and burgers, so there is something for everyone.

**Swiss Diamond Hotel, Umai Asian Restaurant and Sushi Bar** – If you are craving Asian food in Prishtina/Pristina, this is the restaurant to go. Their Asian inspired menu which is designed and run by Asian chefs is quite extensive and includes dishes from Thailand, Philippines, China, and Japan. Their sushi bar is also very good and worth trying.

**TinTin** – Relaxed, funky, hip resto-bar with a small but excellent menu that features the best burgers in Prishtina/Pristina. It has a great ambience with a very cool décor and setting which is great for evening conversations or hanging out with friends.



# WINE

by Taulant Gecaj

*Corporate specialists in the wine and spirits industry*



Kosovo holds great potential for wine. Grapevine cultivation has a particularly long history in the country with numerous traces having been found which can prove that this region has been producing wine for over 2000 years.

The most ancient pieces of evidence for the existence of wine culture in the region are centuries-old wine jars discovered by archaeologists in Reti Village in Rahovec and in Helvetica Teqe.

Today, Kosovo has plenty of grape varieties - both local and international - planted

with over 3 320ha of vines. The capacity of grape processing is between 30 000 and 40 000 tons of grapes yearly and the storage capacity is 500 000 hl.

Kosovo exports 40% bottled and 60% bulk wine, with bottled wines mainly exported to Albania, while bulk wine goes to Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Germany among others.

The Rahovec Valley near the cities of Gjakova and Prizren is by far the biggest wine region in Kosovo, with almost 70% of Kosovo vineyards located there: an average of 270

days of sunshine, the Drini river and an altitude of 350-500m make this area an ideal spot to make good wines.

Stone Castle Vineyards and Winery is the largest and oldest winery in Kosovo, having been producing wines for almost seventy years and owning 650ha of active vineyards. It produces white, red, rose and sparkling wine, using a broad range of grape varieties, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Vranac, and Riesling.

Vranac is the most traditional and authentic wine grape variety in Kosovo and the region. Vranac wines are dark-colored and fruity, with notes of cinnamon, pepper, plum and cherry, and are very well-balanced.

Besides Stone Castle Winery the Kosovo Wine Route will take wine lovers to smaller but not to be ignored wineries, such as Bodrumi I Vjetër, Kosovo Wine, Biopak, and Sefa.



# KOSOVO'S MUSIC

by Visar Munishi

*Ethnomusicologist*



Kosovo, despite its small size and geographic limitations, has been and continues to be a cultural hotbed where music is an inseparable part of everyday life. Being part of the Balkan peninsula and living with other peoples has undoubtedly made cultural exchange inevitable, however, our cultural identity in general and musical identity in particular, remain values that characterize us as a country and as a people.

This short piece about Albanian music of Kosovo, is my attempt at chronologically presenting those values created over the centuries, from folklore, classical music to

rock music, to the present day.

In Albanian “musical folklore” in Kosovo we find one of the deepest artistic “roots”, whose “inception” lies back in antiquity. Musical leaf playing, performed to this day, is an indication of old musical traditions. The cultivation of music as an inherent component of other cultural developments in Kosovo, is also demonstrated by the archaeological discovery in Runik of Skënderaj in 1968, of an “Ocarina” (wind instrument), which according to H. Mehmetaj, archaeologist, dates from the 4th millennium BCE. Likewise, the primeval sound of the

Albanian Lahuta still accompanies the singing of epic songs and lives on within our very rich folklore. Albanian Lahuta playing and the accompanying body of epic songs, despite the political tendencies of appropriation by neighbours, remains one of the important and special values of our ethnic musical tradition, and is perceived and recognized as the most generalizing and unifying value of a wider cultural area. In Kosovo, until recently, we encountered two very specific ways of singing. The first is the singing of men, which are the “Malsorçe” or the “Majekrahi” singing, often used to enable communication over distance between two people. The second manner of singing is represented by the songs of girls with “finger on the throat” or songs of shepherdesses, as they can be known to the people. This kind of singing has gained its uniqueness through the placement of a finger in the throat to vibrate the larynx, where a special sound is obtained and a very specific kind of singing about daily life events, often with stinging lyrics.

Historical epics and songs about our national heroes, folk ballads and other genres of our musical folklore, constitute the invaluable treasure of our musical heritage. The instrumental accompaniment of Çiftelia and Sharkia instruments of folk music genres creates the typical feeling of the Albanian environment for the main reason that these instruments, together with historical epic songs, ballads, love songs, wedding songs, and erotic songs and many genres of others, have been inseparable components of the traditional Albanian environment.

We are known as a country that has always nurtured a deep appreciation for the so-called **“town” and “light”** music genres, which define our taste and love for art and culture in general. We have established important centres of town and light music. Prizren, Gjakova, Peja, Prishtina, Ferizaj, and many other cities, have become cultural centres with very serious organizations. Festivals like “Akordet e Kosovës” (“Kosovo Accords”), “Zambaku i Prizrenit” (“Prizren Lily”), “Kosovarja Këndon” (“Kosovo Woman Singing”), and many other organizations of this type, have been the scenes of our artists and composers since the second half of the last century. Singers like Nexhmije Pagarusha, Liliana Çavolli, Shahindere Bërlajolli, Ismet Peja, Esat Bicurri, and many, many other singers, have made their rich careers in these festivals.

**“Classical Music”** in Kosovo occupies a very important place in the cultural “consumption” of our society. We see the first small steps of development in the early 1900s, with the organization of several choirs and artistic groups. The opening of music schools and then the music department took place in the second half of the twentieth century. The highest institution of classical music, the Kosovo Philharmonic, divided into the symphonic orchestra and choir, for various reasons were established quite late, i.e. immediately after the war, in 2000. Despite the success and very rich repertoire of this institution, Kosovo has not yet managed to have a proper concert hall that would meet the demands of the Kosovan art-loving public. Kosovo, in 2022, was finally able to establish the institution of the Kosovo Opera, an institution



which has already given its first premiere in Prishtina/Prishtina. In Kosovo, the Kosovo Ballet operates very successfully together with the school which was established in the 2000s. Today, Kosovo is proud of its artists who have created successful careers around the world, such as Ramë Lahaj, Petrit Çeku, Elbenita Kajtazi, and many other artists.

During the 1960's, a new stream of music was born in Kosovo, Rock, which lived its heyday in the 1980's. Over these years, a large number of rock bands were established, which created their own identity, and at the same time, all together, also the collective identity of Kosovo Rock. The first years of rock in our country belonged to bands like Modestët, Mak, then Gjurmët, Minatori, 403, Telex, Lindja and many others. During the parallel life of the 90s and after the 2000s, a new generation of well-known rockers has emerged in Kosovo. Bands like Troja, BB Poqi with Armadillo Blues Band, Xuxi with XXL, Marigona, then

later, Jericho, Cute Babulja, Zig Zag Orchestra and many other bands, have enriched the cultural life, while at the same time have reflected the reality of life in Kosovo.

Today, on the world stage of pop and modern music, Kosovo is represented by artists who have climbed to the top of world charts, such as Rita Ora, Dua Lipa, Era Isrefi, and many others. Rita Ora, as one of the first artists to pass the 'filter' of the international public, has been nominated for and received numerous international music awards. She continues to remain quite active on stage and in the general global music scene. As one of the most acclaimed singers in her genre, Dua Lipa has achieved extraordinary success with her musical creativity. Her numerous nominations have led to multiple music awards, including 3 Grammy Awards, six Brit Award, and many other awards. It appears that Kosovo is and will continue to be the ideal birthplace of current and future world music stars.

# SPORT IN KOSOVO

by *Faton Polisi*

*Sports Journalist, Kosovo*



2016 is an important milestone for Kosovo sports. Majlinda Kelmendi brought home to Kosovo the first Olympic gold medal, won at the “Rio 2016” Olympic Games. It was the first major success for independent Kosovo sports.

Majlinda - The Pride of Kosovo, has by now retired from her magnificent career as a judoka, but continues her work as a judo coach with great success.

On the 15th anniversary of Kosovo’s Independence, Kosovo sports won two more Olympic gold medals. And, again, the med-

als come from the judokas Distria Krasniqi and Nora Gjakova.

Distria won her Olympic gold on July 24, 2021. She dominated in Tokyo. Nora also has the most valuable sports medal in her collection. She won her Olympic gold medal on July 26, 2021, also in Tokyo.

Under the leadership of the best judo coach in the world, “Grandmaster” Driton Kuka, Majlinda, Distria, and Nora, have also won many gold, silver and bronze medals in World and European Championships. Thanks to the successes of judokas, Kosovo

has been recognized by the whole world. Judokas are the best image of Kosovo.

Another success story that made the people of Kosovo proud is the journey of 'Ballkani' Football Club. Suhareka's 'Ballkani' Football Club became the first football team from Kosovo to join the group stage of the Conference League, Europe's tertiary club football tournament of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). After winning their first championship title in Kosovo, Suhareka's 'Ballkani' managed to hold on to the dream for European competitions. In the group stage of the Conference League, in the 2022/2023 season, the club was a motivated contender. They didn't make it past the stage, but convincingly conducted the best campaign so far for Kosovan clubs.

Football enjoyed another success. Although they did not qualify, the qualifications for "Euro 2020" remain the best of the Kosovo national football team so far. In a strong group with England, Czechia, Bulgaria and Montenegro, Kosovo placed third. The team collected 11 points, scoring three wins and two draws. They also had three losses. The 5:3 defeat by England in Southampton is etched in the memory, while then the 2:0 victory over Montenegro caused a sensation. Defeats at the end by Czechia and England prevented Kosovo from qualifying.

Kosovo started another qualification campaign after being accepted as a full member of UEFA and FIFA in 2016. Kosovo's goal is to qualify for Euro 2024. Kosovo is in Group I, along with Switzerland, Israel, Belarus, Romania and Andorra.

Two football players from Kosovo, captain Granit Xhaka and vice-captain Xherdan Shaqiri, play for Switzerland. Xherdan was born in Kosovo and Xhaka too has close ties with Kosovo. Both footballers have made the people of Kosovo proud with their achievements in the international arena, especially for the goals and victories against Serbia.

Xhaka is currently part of England's Arsenal, while Shaqiri plays for Chicago Fire, USA, two friendly countries of Kosovo. As part of the Swiss national team, Xhaka and Shaqiri have broken many records.

Xhaka and Shaqiri are expected to appear with Switzerland at the "Fadil Vokrri" stadium in Prishtina/Pristina, to play as guests against Kosovo's national team. The stadium in Prishtina/Pristina bears the name of the legend, Fadil Vokrri. Fadil Vokrri was the leader of the golden generation of the Prishtina/Pristina football club that made it the Major League of the former Yugoslavia in the 1980s. Trepça Football Club has also played in the federal major league.

The Prishtina/Pristina boxing club also played a key role back then. Prishtina/Pristina won five titles in the then federal state. Aziz Salihu won a bronze medal for the former Yugoslavia at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, while Mehmet Bogujevci won a silver medal at the 1978 World Championships.

And, for almost four decades, Kosovar boxing had been waiting for world and European medals. And the waiting came to an end last year. From a female boxer.



Donjeta Sadiku won the World bronze medal in Istanbul and the European bronze medal in Budva. Obviously, her success was historic. No boxer is currently close to matching Donjeta's achievements.

Kosovan karatekas have also won medals at major events. Herolind Nishevci stands out. In 2016 he won a world bronze medal. In 2021, European bronze medals.

In 2022, Elhami Shabani also won a European bronze medal. Karate was an Olympic sport in Tokyo, but has now been removed from the Olympic program.

Kosovo has one national team that has already qualified for a World Championship, the under-21 handball national team. Through an alternative route, an International Federation competition for develop-

ing handball countries, Kosovo qualified for the World Cup held in Spain in 2019.

Kosovo's basketball national team greatest success so far is their run in the qualifications for the 2019 World Cup. It remains the greatest international success of Kosovan basketball.

The "Pristina 2022" Marathon was organized for the first time in Kosovo. Thousands of runners took part in the 2022 Marathon.

Kosovo has the youngest population in Southeast Europe. It is known for the large number of young people involved in sports. And, the successes of young men and women in major events are increasing year by year. Football is the most popular sport, while judo is the most successful.

From judo, medals are also expected at the Olympic Games to be held in Paris in 2024.



# FUNDI/



# THE FASHION DESIGN INDUSTRY

*by Anda Dika*

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Accountable Municipalities project*

The apparel industry of Kosovo has a tradition of over 200 years, and it was once the second largest and most profitable industry after mining. Considering the effective labor cost, qualified employees, and modernized equipment, Kosovo offers a business-friendly environment for all investors who seek outsourcing of apparel production. The sub-categories that are identified within the apparel industry in Kosovo are: sportswear, work wear, jeans, cocktail and bridal gowns, underwear, shoes and other leather products.

In general, sewing and patternmaking is a craft that has been passed down in families for generations in our country. Traditionally, Kosovar families used to have a sewing machine with which they would fulfill the needs of their families. Besides being a necessity, families also used this skill to make traditional clothing. As such, most of the designing, until recently, was seen in the unique handmade elements within this kind of clothing. Traditional clothing continues to be in high demand especially for ceremonial settings. Symbols of traditional clothing serve as an inspiration and



a timeless concept that fashion designers integrate into the modernized styles that they offer today.

In the last two decades, fashion design has brought a lot of attention to Kosovo. What once was seen as a passion is now incorporated into a business model that many have chosen as profession. What used to be a home-based hobby where people elaborated on their artistic skills, has turned into an industry whose products are in high demand in the local, regional and international markets. Previously, in Kosovo we did not have faculties that offered fashion design as a field of study. However, the high demand of students to study in this subject has created the opportunity to study this field as a major in Kosovo and the first step that new designers take before joining the industry is to enroll for their studies in one of the colleges/ universities. Besides university degrees, some designers choose to also follow intensive training or short courses by which they gain intermediate artistic and technical skills. Some designers have also studied abroad or have followed intensive or short courses in the region, Europe and the US.

Fashion designers in Kosovo create ready-to-wear, custom made and *haute couture* garments with which they have drawn attention from all over the world. Products that can be found in the designer showrooms are mostly custom-made and include jackets, trousers, blazers, jumpsuits, tops, knitwear, casual dresses, bags, bridal gowns, and cocktail dresses. However, Kosovo designers are mostly focused on custom-made cocktail and bridal gowns.

Usually, designers present two collections per year followed up with smaller collections throughout the year. Kosovan designers can also offer each client an individual consultation by which they create a desired look for them. Thus, comparing the outstanding quality of the customized creations to the price of their product, they tend to be highly competitive in the regional and international markets.

Being a labor-intensive industry, designers have successfully employed hundreds of people in their production facilities. These facilities are highly structured and composed of design teams, pattern-making teams, seamstresses and the personnel who take care of handmade embellishments. In order to create unique pieces, designers usually import their fabrics from China, India, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. The rise of the fashion design industry has also created a new business opportunity for many in Kosovo selling basic and exclusive high-end fabrics. Designers often visit well-known international fairs where they get the supplies for creation of their new collections. Their visits to these fairs also create business opportunities for international suppliers, who come directly from countries around the world to meet Kosovo designers.

Besides working on their brand, some designers also offer production of private label clothing. This concept has increased the interest of international companies from the US and Europe who seek production of small collections especially for bridal and cocktail dresses. What makes this business model interesting is that the minimum quantity pro-

duced does not need to be high given that most of the bridal and cocktail gowns are custom-made. International brands thus place orders depending on the demand that they have in their stores. The labor cost is relatively low compared to other markets where *haute couture* or custom-made bridal and cocktail gowns are produced. Considering that the fabrics are imported, the total cost of making a unique dress is not very low, yet it is still competitive for the international market.

Most fashion designers in Kosovo present their collections in their showrooms, which are mainly based in Prishtina/Pristina. Some designers have managed to open up to three stores in Kosovo. Others have also successfully opened their own stores in other countries. In addition, marketing their products through social media has offered them the opportunity to have great exposure worldwide. Many have secured a place in international showrooms where they are represented by sales agents together with other designers.

Kosovo designers' creations have been worn at major artistic gatherings and red carpet events. In the last three years, their designs have been showcased at events such as the amfAR Gala, the Angel Ball, Arab Fashion Week, the BET Awards, the BRIT Awards, the Canadian Screen Awards, the Cannes Film Festival, the EMMY Awards, Filmfare Glamour and Style Awards, the Golden Globes, the Grammy Awards, the Latin Grammys, the Lux Golden Rose Awards, MTV's Video Music Awards, the Oscars, the Pre-Grammy Awards, the Royal Order of Constantine the Great and Saint Helen Evening, the Stellar

Awards, the TIME 100 Gala, the Toronto Film Festival, the UNICEF Masquerade Ball, Vanity Fair events, the Venice Film Festival, the Vogue Beauty Awards, movie premieres, music videos and live performances. Their names and pictures have been part of the most prominent fashion magazines such as ELLE Magazine, Harper's Bazaar Magazine, Metropolitan Magazine, New York Magazine, Vogue Magazine, Wedding Planner & Lifestyle Magazine and many more. These designers have styled eminent artists of music and cinematography, and icons of the fashion industry. The presence of Kosovan designers in these events has gained high levels of media attention through their unique creations which, as well as serving as PR for their brands, has also promoted Kosovo's potential and skilled workforce.

In conclusion, the fashion industry has great potential for further development and expansion. Clients from the region often visit Kosovo to buy customized products and many others order their desired looks through online platforms. Given that it is a highly labor-intensive industry and that there is demand from the local and international market, existing brands have great potential to further expand by opening their own showrooms in other countries and increasing the number of employees within their companies. In addition, offering private label production for other brands could also become an interesting division within this industry, which would attract the interest of many international brands. Thus, the fashion design industry promises to employ a high number of people in the upcoming years, while promoting Kosovo worldwide and boosting its economy.



# KOSOVO AND ALTERNATIVE TOURISM

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*by Muamer Hasani*

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*Curator at the Sultan Murat tomb complex  
Executive Director of Kosovo Tourist Guide Association*



No cultural or study visit to Southeast Europe, and especially to the Western Balkans, can be complete without Kosovo being part of it. Although this statement sounds just like pompous advertising, it can be verified with a review of all that the country offers. Since Kosovo does not have a coast, then its offer has to concentrate mainly on cultural tourism, cuisine, eco-tourism, etc., and its menu can be quite wide and interesting.

## Battle of Kosovo – Field of Blackbirds

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Only a few kilometres away from Prishtina/ Pristina, a battle took place in 1389 between the Ottoman Empire and a Balkan coalition, which resulted in the physical and spiritual division of Europe. Today, a monument stands

as a witness to this event. European peoples have names in their languages for this event. The Germans called it Amselfeld, and during the 1970s and 1980s the wine imported there from Kosovo had the same name.



How important this monument is in terms of history, politics, culture, but also religion, is revealed by some facts listed below. The tomb which stands nearby receives about 20,000 visitors a year without any marketing.

The monument in question is the mausoleum of Sultan Murat located in the village of Mazgit and is the oldest Ottoman architecture in Kosovo, dating from the fourteenth century. From the fifteenth century until today, there is no guide, geographer, historian, or pilgrim (most of whom have

been westerners), who does not mention the Battle of Kosovo and the Murat mausoleum. Jean Palerne, in the second half of the sixteenth century, Edward Browne, and Johann Georg von Hahn, who would later be called the father of Albanian studies, travelled through the southern Balkans and visited the mausoleum.

Edith Durham gained a great reputation among northern Albanians for her interest and support for their cause. She was known in the mountains as the 'Queen of the High-

landers' and she travelled to Prishtina/Pristina, and of course visited the tomb of Sultan Murat, and gives abundant details about its condition. Then we have Rebecca West, author of *Black Lamb and Gray Falcon*, and also known as a critic, essayist, and feminist. West and her husband visited Yugoslavia on the eve of the outbreak of World War II.

The winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature (1996), Polish poet Wisława Szymborska, in her poem entitled 'Reality Demands', writes of the Kosovo battlefield,

*'Reality demands  
that we also mention this:  
Life goes on.  
It continues at Cannae and Borodino,  
at Kosovo Polje and Guernica.'*

## Promotion of Coffee Culture

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'God, please don't leave us without coffee'

'Where is the best macchiato in the world? It's not in Italy?! Wherever you go in Kosovo you can find better macchiato than in Italy,' says the article by Jo Piazza, which was published in October 2014 when Kosovo was declared the country with the best macchiato in the world.

In 1725, a poem of 17 verses is dedicated to coffee by Muçi Zade, author of the oldest known verses in Albanian, written in Arabic fonts. The poem is entitled "Lord, don't leave me without coffee".

*Here is an excerpt, translated by Robert Elsie:*

*"Lord, don't let me break my fast with  
Nought to eat but syrup, honey,  
Oh God, you are my salvation,  
Lord, don't leave me without coffee."*

In 1844, there were 11 coffee sellers in Prishtina/Pristina, making it one of the top

professions in the city, while there were only 3 cooks, 2 perfume makers, and 4 shoemakers.

In Kosovo there are several theories as to why our macchiatos are the best in the world, one of them being that bartenders in our country have Master's degrees. Perhaps this theory holds true, but looking at the history we see that Albanians have a deep connection with coffee.

Coffee reached Europe through the Ottoman Empire during the second siege of Vienna (1683), when for the first time this 'strange' drink fell into the hands of Europeans. At first Europeans were sceptical about the drink, which was believed to turn you Turkish or Muslim. However, in a very short time it penetrated every corner of the old continent. The first Europeans who laid their hands on coffee and made emotional connections with it were not the Viennese, but the Albanians.





## Monuments to American Presidents

Something interesting that could be shown as a tourist attraction in Kosovo would be the existence of monuments, boulevards, street names, and even shops named after American political personalities. There are seven countries outside the US who have monuments of American presidents: Albania, Cameroon, China, Great Britain, Greece, Mexico, and Kosovo.

Kosovo erected a monument to Bill Clinton in 2009, next to a store named after his wife, Hillary. There is a Woodrow Wilson Street and just behind Clinton Boulevard are George W. Bush and Robert Dole Streets. From here one can walk to the bust of Madeleine Albright, the former US Secretary of State during the Clinton administration. This was erected in 2019, on the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Kosovo.

# MOUNTAINS

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by Arineta Mula

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*Alpinist, Mountain Guide Montalb*



Kosovo offers a wide range of fascinating and fun adventures, many of which are wild and hidden away from the world. It is home to the Accursed Mountains range, also referred to as the Albanian Alps, which spread right across Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro and touch the western part of the country from where you can hike to Gjeravica, one of the most beautiful peaks in the Balkans and surrounded by glacial lakes.

Within this mountain range, and just twenty minutes from the old town of Peja/Peć, lies

the mysterious and charming Rugova Valley which covers an area of 32 000 hectares. It is huge, unspoilt and breathtakingly beautiful. The valley is also home to a small number of villages which in turn house a variety of guest homes and restaurants, all of which have become famous for their hospitality and charm. To learn more of the culture you simply have to taste the delicious local traditional food, the recipes of which have been handed down from one generation to another. It just doesn't get more authentic than this.



The Rugova Canyon, 25km long and 1000m deep, is considered one of Europe's longest and deepest canyons, and although lined with quite sharp rocks, they can easily be climbed through three existing Via Ferratas. If you're looking for a majestic view of the mountains in a different way, you just found it.

Go a little further south towards Prizren/Prizren, and you will discover the Sharr Mountain National Park range which is 80km in length and includes glacial lakes and peri-glacial landscapes. Luboten peak

is the first mountain which stands as a pyramid followed by other peaks, forming breath-taking long ridges one after another.

If, however, you prefer skiing to hiking then you haven't been forgotten. Nestled in the Sharr Mountains is the ski resort of Brezovica, and although this may not be St. Moritz, it has some superb alpine terrain providing great free-ride and tree skiing opportunities on a par with anything you will ever find.

If you love the wild, the untouched and the breath-taking, you'll find it all here in Kosovo.

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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*by Burim Ejupi*

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*Executive Director at Institute for Development Policy INDEP*



## Climate Change

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Kosovo is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, but since it aspires to join the European Union and has signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), it is obliged to implement the policies that emerge from chapter 27 and are related to the environment and climate change. Starting from the fact that Kosovo is a newborn state still facing elementary problems related to the development of the economy, health, and the rule of law, it has not yet managed to pay

enough attention to the protection of the environment or designate it as a priority in its government program.

In the 2021-2025 Government program, the chapter on Environment and Spatial Planning, the drafting of a strategy for sustainable development and environmental protection is foreseen. In the framework of this program, the adoption of a series of laws related to the protection of nature and biodiversity, including the law on climate change and the inventory of greenhouse

gas emissions, is foreseen. Meanwhile, the signing of the SAA in 2015 and the Green Agenda in 2020, are two important initiatives with which Kosovo also wants to prove that it is committed to giving its contribution to the protection of the environment.

Within the framework of the SAA, Article 116, climate change section, Kosovo is expected to address climate concerns, align the legislation with the EU acquis, and take measures to monitor and reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to the fields of energy, transportation, industry, and agriculture. With these actions, Kosovo will be able to join global efforts that contribute to the field of climate change.

Kosovo is in the process of drafting the Law on Climate Change. The purpose of this law

is to determine the framework for planning policies for climate change and monitoring its implementation, to strengthen and coordinate the activities of state authorities in planning measures aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change and monitoring their results, to ensure the fulfilment of obligations according to binding international agreements for Kosovo and others. Kosovo has not calculated how many green jobs will be created in the future. Furthermore, Kosovo has not even defined the potential of investments in green projects and has not used the COVID-19 pandemic to make a green recovery. Not using the pandemic to focus the recovery on green investments will cause Kosovo to lag behind in advancing environmental protection and reducing the effects of climate change.

## Energy

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In Kosovo, electricity is mainly produced in the two main coal power plants. The total operating capacity of electricity generation in Kosovo is 1,236 MW, of which 960 MW or 77.7% are from coal power plants and the rest are hydro plants and renewable energy sources (hydro plants, wind plants, and photovoltaic panels). The total production of electricity in 2022 was 6,315 GWh, while in 2021 it was 6,207 GWh, which means that there is an increase of 1.7%. The gross production of thermal power plants in 2022 was 6,346 MWh, while the production of RES connected to the transmission network in 2022 was 469.4 GWh and is higher by

57.8% compared to 2021, due to the operation with a full capacity of 103.41 MW of the Sowi wind farm. While the production of RES connected to the distribution network was 167.8 which is 20.2% higher compared to 2021.

Kosovo is relatively dependent on energy imports. The share of imports to the overall demand for energy was 11.63%, marking a decrease of about 7.41% compared to the previous year, which was about 19.04%. The country usually imports energy from the region countries, mainly through the HUPX power exchange.



The import of electricity is mainly done during the winter months since consumers use electricity in the absence of thermal energy to heat their premises. This made the demand of electricity consumers to be more than half higher than the production capacity of Kosovo.

Electricity consumption in Kosovo has increased significantly in the last 10 years. The average annual growth rate of total electricity consumption was 1.4%, driven mainly by growth in the household sector. In the industrial sector, the use of electricity during the last decade has not increased. Although losses in the distribution network have decreased in absolute and relative terms, they still remain extremely high (technical losses ~12.5%) compared to the EU average (6%-8%).

The transmission network of the electricity system of Kosovo is quite developed and

offers sufficient security of the system and is well connected with the regional and European systems through interconnecting lines with:

1. Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia - with 400 kV lines;
2. Albania and Serbia - with 220 kV lines;
3. Serbia - with two 110 kV lines.

The transmission network of the electric power system of Kosovo meets the local transmission needs as well as the N-1 criterion for the entire high voltage level.

In March 2023, Kosovo approved the "Kosovo Energy Strategy 2022-2031" in the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. The strategy represents the main document of the energy sector in Kosovo, thus becoming a guide for achieving the targets until 2031. This document has five main objectives, which are:

1. Improving system reliability
2. Decarbonization and promotion of renewable energy
3. Increasing energy efficiency
4. Strengthening regional cooperation and strengthening the market

5. Consumer protection and empowerment

The vision of the strategy is clear, A stable energy sector, integrated into the Pan-European market, which guarantees the security of electricity supply and affordability for citizens.

## Waste

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Waste is one of the most considerable environmental problems in Kosovo. Waste generation per capita (kg/inhabitants/day) resulted in 0.75 kg/inhabitants/day, respectively 273 kg/inhabitants/year. In Kosovo in 2021, a total of 485 thousand tons of municipal waste have been collected. The total amount of municipal waste collected for 2021 has increased by 6.4%, compared to 2020. The difference between the waste that is generated and the waste that is collected ends up in hundreds of illegal dumpsites, scattered throughout the environment.

From the registration of illegal landfills in 38 municipalities, 1,189 illegal dumps were registered. Compared to the preliminary registration of illegal landfills in 2020, in 2021 a small improvement in the elimination of illegal landfills has been noted with a difference of 300 landfills. There is still no developed infrastructure for the disposal and treatment of municipal waste, which is why it has resulted in the appearance of a large number of illegal landfills. The region with the most illegal landfills is the region of Prishtina with a total of 277, while the re-

gion of Gjakova has the fewest landfills with a total of 39. Some of the sanitary landfills managed by KMDK (Company for Landfill Management in Kosovo) are Mirashi (Prishtina/Pristina), Dumnica (Podujeva/Podujevo), Velekinca (Gjilan/Gnjilane), Landovice (Prizren), Sferk (Peja/Peć), and Germovë (Mitrovica). The amount of waste deposited in these licensed landfills in 2021 was 483.777/t.

According to the Waste Management Strategy (2021-2030), strategic objectives, specific objectives, targets, and indicators for the waste management and recycling sector are defined. The strategy covers a ten-year period from 2021 to 2030 and includes a three-year Action Plan from 2020 to 2023. This strategy aims to address the current shortcomings and limitations in the waste management sector, defining and realizing the following four strategic objectives:

- Development of a new generation of integrated waste management services and infrastructure.
- Professionalization of the waste management and recycling sector.

- Strengthening regulation and control in the waste management sector by filling the gaps and clarifying the implementation mechanisms.
- Promotion of the values and practices of a circular economy.

Protecting public health and reducing the impact of waste on the environment, at the same time increasing opportunities for business and employment, and transitioning towards a circular economy harmonized with European norms and standards will affect Kosovo's progress towards economic potential and living standards.

The amount of recycled waste in 2021 was 21,307 tons. While the total amount of treated and deposited waste in 2021 was 506,044 tons. Compared to the data for 2020, there is an increase of 12.4%. In terms of the type of waste with the largest percentage of recycling, paper and cardboard

waste is 51%. Informal waste collectors play an important role in the collection of recyclable waste throughout Kosovo, but there is no official data or measurement of the amount of waste collected in this way. They collect certain types of plastics, metals, paper and cardboard, batteries, and waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and sell them to licensed companies, usually for export. In urban areas, waste is collected through common collection points, while in rural areas, the collection is done door-to-door. Significant progress has been made in expanding the coverage of collection services, which is reported to be over 80% of the population as of 2019, thus meeting the proposed target for 2021, but not yet 100%. The main challenges of waste management in Kosovo are related to insufficient inter-institutional cooperation, budget shortfalls, lack of (trained) staff, lack of investment in infrastructure, public awareness, and weak enforcement of laws.

## Air Quality

Many cities in Kosovo suffer from poor air quality, with ambient concentrations of particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres or less (PM2.5) significantly exceeding the national and European Union (EU) standards and global air quality guidelines for PM2.5 established by the World Health Organization (WHO). The air pollution in the capital city of Prishtina rivals that of big cities like Beijing, Mumbai, and New Delhi. Especially in winter, urban areas face severe smog episodes, caused by the in-

creased demand for heat from the residential and commercial sectors, which is mainly provided by burning solid fuels. Such levels of air pollution are unsafe for Kosovo's population of 1.9 million and cause significant deleterious health impacts.

Several times a year, especially in winter, the air in some cities of Kosovo is the most polluted worldwide. The energy system based on fossil fuels is the biggest contributor to air pollution, such as the thermal power plant in Obiliq.



Its annual emissions are estimated at about 14,500 tons of SO<sub>2</sub>, 22,000 tons of NO<sub>x</sub>, and 8,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. During the winter, air quality pollution is also affected by the use of other fossil resources by the residential sector, for heating the premises in the absence of city heaters. After the energy sector, transport and waste are the main air pollutants. Transport is a smaller but important source of air pollution, especially in Prishtina/Pristina. The government of Kosovo has decided by law to ban the import of cars older than 10 years. This is for the reduction of air pollution from cars, and the gradual improvement of the environment.

The GoK has developed a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for Air Quality Management over the last decade. To a large extent, these efforts have been geared toward transposing EU Directives into domestic legislation. Specifically, the 2009 Law on Environmental Protection promotes the establishment of a healthy environment for Kosovo's population. Its provisions mandate the government to establish

norms to limit emissions and monitor environmental quality in the air, soil, and water.

Several organizations have responsibilities for Air Quality Management in Kosovo at the national and local levels. The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo is the national legislative body, consisting of representatives who are directly elected by the people. Within the Assembly, two committees have direct responsibility over environmental issues:

- (a) Environment and Spatial Planning and
- (b) Agriculture, Forestry, and Rural Development.

The Assembly is responsible for approving the Air Quality Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan and oversees progress on the implementation of the Air Quality Action Plan based on annual reporting by the government, as required under the Law on Air Protection from Pollution's provisions. The Assembly also approves the national budget and has an important role in allocating sufficient resources for Air Quality Management.



# Water

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The territory of Kosovo, in terms of hydrography, is rich in ground and underground waters, with a variety of rivers, and artificial or natural reservoirs. The topographic watershed of Kosovo is 11,645 km<sup>2</sup>, while the existing reservoirs are 569,690.00 m<sup>2</sup>. There are nine rivers with the largest inflows within the year located in the White Drin Basin. In hydrographic terms, Kosovo is divided into 4 river basins:

- White Drin,
- Ibri/Ibar,
- Morava e Binçës, and
- Lepenci.

Kosovo's rivers flow into four marine watersheds, and these rivers leave Kosovo within 24 hours from the source point. Since these water sources do not stay in Kosovo, it is difficult to fulfil the needs of Kosovo citizens, for drinking and irrigation water, fishery, tourism, and generation of electricity. Compared to its neighbours, Kosovo is considered to be water stressed. Also, Kosovo has the lowest level of water resources developed with infrastructure. Overall, Kosovo is relatively water scarce and has modest precipitation which generally falls in winter, and the majority in the southwestern part.

Kosovo has a small number of natural lakes. It has some accumulations superficial or otherwise known as Artificial Lakes (Batlava, Ujmani, Radoniqi, Perlepnica, and Badovc), as well as a number of small lakes for irrigation. According to the Master Wa-

ter Plan (1983), in the Kosovo territory were planned to be built also twenty surface water accumulations as well as a number of micro-accumulations.

In 2021, approximately 96.88% of the population of Kosovo was furnished with water through the public system managed by the Regional Water Company, whereas 3.16% do not have access to the service of public water supply. However, through the years there have been an increasing number of citizens who have access to the public water supply.

Rivers in Kosovo are polluted, especially the middle streams around the residences are not in good condition and are overloaded with pollutants of various natures, and they are without effective institutional protection. Unfortunately, in the rivers are thrown inert waste, and industrial discharge and converted into sites of discharge of black waters.

Regarding water pollution, the EU continuously recommends Kosovo, among others, to:

- Establish an effective water monitoring system, publish data and undertake urgent and permanent measures to reduce water pollution;
- Enforce legal provisions on environmental liability, damage, and crime; implement the polluter pays principle and create and start a permanent campaign for raising

public awareness on environmental protection.

There is only one sewage plant until now in Kosovo that treats polluted urban waters, which is in Skenderaj. The discharge of

black waters is done directly in rivers thus it represents one of the main pollution factors of surface waters. In 2021 three more sewage plants were built in Prizren, Gjakova, and Peja. These sewage plants now are in the testing phase.

## Biodiversity

The area of Kosovo, compared to other countries of the Balkans and Europe, is distinguished by numerous natural resources and rich biodiversity. Based on research conducted so far, about 1,800 plant species are found in Kosovo. The vegetation of Kosovo is classified into 139 genera, 63 families, 35 orders, and 20 classes. Meanwhile, the data of the fauna so far show that over 210 wild species of vertebrates are widespread in Kosovo, while the invertebrates are very little researched, and from this group, there are data for about 200 species of butterflies, about 400 taxa of the macrobenthos of the waters.

There are 115 protected nature areas in Kosovo, covering an area of 118,913.95 ha (10.9% of the area of Kosovo). These areas include 11 Strict Nature Reserves ("Bifurcation of the Nerodime River", "Arnen Reserve", "Maja e Ropsi", "Rusenica", "Kamilja", etc.), 2 National Parks (PK "Sharri",

KP "Bjeshket e Nemuna"), 99 Natural Monuments ("The Source of the White Drin with the Radavci Cave", "The Gadima Cave", "Mirusha Waterfalls", "Rugova Gorge", "The Canyon of the Drin Bardhë te Ura e Fshajte", "Trungu i Rapit in Marash", etc.), 1 Regional Nature Park ("Gërmia"), 2 Protected Landscapes ("Shkugeza" and "Pishat e Deçani") and 1 Special Protected Area of Birds ("Wetlands of Henci-Radeve"). The largest area of protected areas is made up of the "Bjeshket e Nemuna" and "Sharri" National Parks.

Kosovo has also adopted several laws that protect different aspects of the environment. They include Law on Environmental Protection, Law on Waste, Law on Strategic Environmental Evaluation, Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, Law on Prevention and Integrated Control of Pollution, Law on Protection from Noise, Law on the Protection of Air from Pollution, and dozens of administrative acts.

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# IMPRINT

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## **Title**

Republic of Kosovo, Facts and Figures 2nd edition

## **For the publishers**

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung  
German-Kosovar Business Association

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## **Design**

ASHA

## **Printing**

ASHA

## **This publication is available at**

<http://www.kas.de/kosovo>

<https://oegjk.org/>

## **Note**

The viewpoints presented in this publication do not reflect the positions of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the German-Kosovar Business Association, and are rather personal stances of the authors.

