



UNITED NATIONS
KOSOVO TEAM



Common Kosovo Analysis 2022 Revision SUMMARY

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBK	Central Bank of Kosovo	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	MDB	Multilateral Development Banks
CKA	Common Kosovo Analysis	MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
CMIS	Case Management Information System	MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
CoE	Council of Europe	MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
CPA	Country Programmable Aid	NDS	National Development Strategy
CRSV	Conflict-related Sexual Violence	NGO	Non-governmental Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization	ODA	Official Development Assistance
DEFI	Decentralised Financing	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	OGG	Office of Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination
EC	European Commission	OIK	Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo
ECE	Early Childhood Education	OPTP	Open Procurement Transparency Portal
ERA	European Reform Agenda	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
EU	European Union	PIK	Pedagogic Institute of Kosovo
F2F	Funding to Finance	PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
FCPNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	PPRC	Public Procurement Regulatory Commission
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment	PRB	Procurement Review Body
GCF	Green Climate Fund	SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
GEF	Global Environmental Facility	SAS	Social Assistance Scheme
GEF	Global Environmental Facility Small	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGP	Grants Programme	SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
HCBM	Human-Centred Business Model	SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	TOOSD	Total Official Support for Sustainable Development
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IFIs	International Financial Institutions	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
KAS	Kosovo Agency of Statistics	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
KEPA	Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency	UNKT	United Nations Kosovo Team
KJC	Kosovo Judicial Council	UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
KPC	Kosovo Prosecutorial Council	WHO	World Health Organization
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind		

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¹ All references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Kosovo has made progress in support of democratisation, economic reconstruction, rule of law and effective governance. The government's strong parliamentary majority gained in the February 2021 elections, coupled with demonstrated public confidence in its delivery on anti-corruption promises, have contributed to institutional stability and laid the foundation to advance reforms. Further efforts are needed to fully implement the framework aligned with the European Union (EU) *acquis*, anchored around principles of human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and resilient development, and to support Kosovo's progress towards EU integration and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). EU integration remains a key incentive for the normalisation of Pristina-Belgrade relations, amidst rising geopolitical tensions. Kosovo's declared ambitions for Euro-Atlantic integration have become more urgent due to the war in Ukraine, with implications for regional stability.
2. Kosovo's economic development remains marked by a combination of steady growth but modest poverty reduction, with high unemployment, low labour force participation and reliance on diaspora inflows. The health impact of COVID-19 has been moderate and negative economic effects were largely mitigated through effective fiscal measures and renewed growth in 2021. Yet, widening inequality gaps and regressions in social cohesion risk increasing due to pre-existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities in Kosovo's health and social protection systems and the potential long-term effects of school closures on already low education levels. Energy and food prices, on the rise since 2021, are susceptible to further inflation caused by the war in Ukraine. These deficiencies are compounded by a lack of agreement on Kosovo's status. Yet, the situation presents opportunities for solidarity and cooperation through regional trade and commerce initiatives in favour of regional success.
3. Environmental and climate change challenges pose a risk to stability. Simultaneously, green transition and digitalisation initiatives provide opportunities for sustainable growth and improved productivity, but their success depends on political will to invest, reform and train the labour force. The ability to introduce energy efficiency measures to reduce energy consumption and achieve stability in Kosovo's energy sector will be key. Modest increases in exports in manufacturing and agro-food, facilitated by nearshoring demands, are encouraging. Kosovo has one of Europe's youngest populations, which can build resilience and lead to positive change both politically and economically but also poses pressure on an already scarce labour market. Like all of the Balkans, Kosovo is facing high outward migration and decreasing fertility rates. Concluding reform of the social assistance scheme offers an opportunity to address poverty challenges effectively. Despite progressive legislation, including recent strategies on domestic violence and human rights, Kosovo is constrained by social and gender imbalance and a lack of systematic, effective implementation of its human rights framework and mechanisms.

4. A lack of data makes it difficult to obtain a detailed view of progress towards each SDG, to identify needs, or to identify and address equity gaps. As a result, certain groups, such as certain categories of women, children, non-majority communities, people on the

move, people with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ persons, are at risk of being left behind. The upcoming NDS 2030 provides a critical opportunity for the government to reinforce its commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

1. KOSOVO CONTEXT

Political Situation and Governance Trends

5. Since the end of the conflict in 1999 and Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in 2008, notable progress has been made towards **democratisation, rule of law** and **effective governance**. The landslide victory of the Vetëvendosje (VV) movement in the 2021 elections marked a first for a single party to secure over 50% of votes. Prime Minister Kurti's progressive reform agenda, messaging against corruption, organized crime and abuse of power, and promise of socioeconomic reforms resonated, in particular with women, youth and the diaspora.
6. Kosovo has expanded trade, advanced its market economy, and made strides towards integration into the European Union (EU). As a potential candidate for membership, a **Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)** has been in force with the EU since 2016,² providing a framework for reforms and development. The EU is Kosovo's largest aid donor and, since 2007, has supported political and economic reforms for candidates and potential candidates in the Western Balkans, via financial and technical assistance under the **Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)**.
7. Lack of agreement on the **normalisation of relations** between Pristina and Belgrade is hindering progress. Although 22 EU Member States recognise Kosovo's independence, the Security Council remains divided on **Kosovo's status**, keeping it on its agenda under resolution 1244 (1999). The prospect of EU membership, a key incentive for Pristina and Belgrade to normalise relations, has been hampered by deceleration of the enlargement process and disagreement on accession. Although Kosovo has met the formal requirements for visa liberalisation and the European Commission (EC) issued a proposal to the European Parliament and Council recommending visa liberalisation for Kosovo,³ the Council has not approved the proposal. In April 2020, upon appointment of Miroslav Lajčák as the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other regional issues in the Western Balkans, the **EU-facilitated Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina** (Dialogue) resumed and led to two meetings between Prime Minister Kurti and President Vučić in 2021. However, the escalation of tensions around the agreement on freedom of movement and Kosovo police operations

² See: EC 2015. [“Stabilisation and Association Agreement \(SAA\) between the European Union and Kosovo signed”](#).

³ See also: EC, 2021. [Key findings of the 2021 Report on Kosovo](#).

in northern Kosovo heightened mistrust and rhetoric, and ongoing disagreements over the Community/Association of Serb-majority Municipalities, licence plates, voting issues and the issue of missing persons continue to hinder progress. Increased engagement of women⁴ in the Dialogue and a unified international approach on Kosovo's status would aid the normalisation process.

8. The **representation of women in leadership positions** is an ongoing issue. Although the **Law on General Elections** requires 30% of candidates for public elections to be women and the **Law on Gender Equality** requires measures favouring 50% of women in public institutions, additional efforts are needed at central and local levels. The latter has never been enforced and, in the 2017 and 2019 legislative elections, the 30% quota was met only marginally. Yet, there are signs of progress: In 2021, the most women were elected to the Assembly and the highest government positions since 2008, with 43 women appointed to the 120-seat parliament (35.83%), only 25% of which relied on the quota to secure their seats. Of the top 10 most voted candidates, five were women, including former Assembly Chairperson and former acting President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, who received the **most votes of any candidate in Kosovo's election history**. She was elected President in 2021. Albin Kurti's government is

comprised of 18 cabinet members, six of whom are women. Of the 14 functional committees in the Assembly, eight are chaired by women. At the local level, more efforts are needed to foster equality. During the 2021 local elections, 14 women, a mere 8.3% of 167 certified candidates, competed for mayoral positions and just two won. The persistent **under-representation of women at local decision-making levels** in Kosovo reflects deep-rooted patriarchal norms. Political parties should adopt internal regulations to enable wider participation of women in electoral processes.⁵

9. The Constitution guarantees rights and freedoms and envisages the direct applicability of core United Nations⁶ and European⁷ **human rights instruments**. Kosovo carries out ad hoc reporting under these instruments, although it cannot be a party to them due to its unresolved status. Despite its advanced legal framework and dedicated human rights bodies and mechanisms, reporting is fragmented and legal guarantees rarely implemented.
10. **Freedom of expression** is enshrined in the Constitution; however, political influence over the media remains "concerning"⁸. In 2021, Kosovo dropped eight places (to 78th out of 180) in the Reporters without Borders world press freedom ranking.⁹ Kosovo may be the only place in Europe without a daily newspaper in print; the digitisation of media

⁴ The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General underlined the importance of integrating a gender perspective into political dialogue processes in reports covering [16 October through 15 January 2019](#) and [16 January through 15 May 2019](#).

⁵ [EU Election Observation Mission Kosovo 2021 Final Report](#).

⁶ Article 22 of the Kosovo Constitution does not include the ICESCR among international human rights instruments directly applicable in Kosovo. However, Serbia is a party to the ICESCR.

⁷ This includes the European Convention on Human Rights and the Council of Europe (CoE) FCPNM. In 2019, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo granted full permission for Article 22 of the Constitution to be amended to include the Istanbul Convention among directly applicable international legal instruments for the protection of human rights.

⁸ Freedom House, 2021. [Freedom in the World](#).

⁹ See: Reporters without Borders, [2021 World Press Freedom Index](#).

and competitive pressure¹⁰ have led to media fragmentation and multiple online portals with little to no oversight by the Kosovo Press Council and, thus, unreliable, low quality “single” source reporting. Limited oversight also led to **inaccurate information on COVID-19** in news portals and social media.¹¹ On social media, threats against journalists increased alongside divisive narratives, with potential to aggravate mistrust and grievances among communities.¹² Few Serbian-language outlets serve the Serb non-majority community in Kosovo. Although Serbian is one of two official languages, few reporters speak sufficient Serbian, and Belgrade-controlled Serbian media outlets heavily influence the Kosovo Serb community, lending to divisive, one-sided reporting.¹³

11. High Internet penetration facilitates these trends:¹⁴ Kosovo has nearly **1.1 million social media users** with Facebook the most used social media source.¹⁵ Studies reveal **limited media literacy** across the Balkans, helping explain how COVID-19 conspiracy theories gained support in Kosovo.¹⁶
12. Although a multi-ethnic society, Kosovo lacks a vision shared by all communities.

Despite **peaceful cohabitation** among ethnic groups, divisive historical and political narratives hinder progress in inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation at the community level, exacerbated by certain violations of the rights and interests of non-majority communities. The divide is most prominent between K-Albanians and K-Serbs and complex in Serb-majority municipalities. Language differences split communities and affect access to services and information. Efforts must ensure the **rights of persons belonging to non-majority groups**, including K-Roma and K-Ashkali, and of displaced persons, and advance the protection of cultural heritage.¹⁷

13. Although the government responded swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic, **parallel health systems** run by Pristina and Belgrade led to inconsistencies in data and incongruent containment measures, although Kosovo authorities have allowed vaccines from Serbia to be used in the health-care system in Kosovo. Government messages on COVID-19 measures were often delayed in non-Albanian languages, hindering the right to information and health of select community members.

¹⁰ New media outlets are often developed to prevent new competition or to recycle content to maximise investment.

¹¹ National Democratic Institute, “[Monitoring Information Integrity Disorders in Kosovo](#),” 8 June 2021.

¹² A recent UN study found increased discriminatory or prejudicial speech, disinformation campaigns and fake news, with ethnic and religious undertones. Another report found 42% of respondents in the Western Balkans reported divisive content on social media; UNDP with UNFPA and RYCO, 2021. “[Shared Futures – Youth Perceptions on Peace in the Western Balkans](#)”.

¹³ Aspen Western Balkans Stakeholder Forum 2021, *Media Freedom in the Western Balkans*, Dec 2021.

¹⁴ In Q3 2021, 96.1% of Kosovo’s population had Internet, with only 2.1% of households without any kind of access. In Jan 2021, there were 1.1 million social media users, equivalent to about 57% of the total population. See: KAS,

[Survey on the Usage of Information and Communication Technology \(ICT\) 2021](#); Hootsuite/Datareportal, [Digital 2021 report for Kosovo](#), 11 Feb 2021; and [Eurostat April 2019 data](#).

¹⁵ According to statistical information obtained through various sources. See: hallakate social media agency, “[Online users in Kosovo by age](#)” and slideshare, [Digital 2021: Kosovo](#).

¹⁶ An index measuring resilience potential to fake news in 35 European countries (not Kosovo but including the Western Balkans), used indicators for media freedom, education and trust. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia were ranked last. Open Society Institute, [Media Literacy Index 2021: Double Trouble: Resilience to Fake News at the Time of Covid-19 Infodemic](#).

¹⁷ EC, 2021. [Key findings of the 2021 Report on Kosovo](#).

14. Similarly, **parallel education systems** lend to segregation, exacerbated by few opportunities to learn other languages spoken in Kosovo and poor implementation of **language legislation**. The government's decision to stop recognising Serbian-issued academic certificates excludes students with qualifications gained in the parallel education system from Kosovo government scholarships and from opportunities to study in Pristina. During her 2018 mission to Kosovo, the Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights called for educational opportunities in Serbian.¹⁸
15. **Inter-ethnic tensions** hinder reconciliation. Security incidents involving non-majority returnee communities may be ethnically motivated but are typically unresolved.¹⁹ The return in 2021 of the first K-Serb since 1999 to Gjakovë/Đakovica (an area with high casualties in the conflict) showed challenges to peaceful coexistence. Kosovo's Property Comparison and Verification Agency allowed the woman, who lived in Kosovo before the conflict, to use her apartment, but a petition by the K-Albanian community opposed this. The Basic Court rejected the request in 2021, but rhetoric continued.²⁰ Yet, public perception of tensions has improved. A 2021 survey showed 41% of K-Albanians and 37% of K-Serbs cite advances.²¹ Local outreach could ease inter-ethnic tension, foster dialogue and sustain peace.
16. The Constitution declares Kosovo secular, providing for freedom of thought, conscience and religion and prohibiting discrimination on religious grounds. The 2006 **Law on Freedom of Religion** provides general protection from discrimination and penal sanction, religious equality and neutrality, freedom of religious association, and rights to self-determination and self-regulation.²² Amendments with recommendations of international bodies, including the Venice Commission are awaiting parliamentary approval.²³
17. An inclusive approach to **deal with the past** is needed for reconciliation. As of December 2021, 1,621 persons remained unaccounted since the conflict. An inter-ministerial **working group on missing persons** between Pristina and Belgrade to deal with the past and foster reconciliation, and a **transitional justice resource centre** at the University of Pristina require acceleration and inclusivity.²⁴ The working group last met in 2021. The government is reviewing the **Law on Missing Persons**, including reparations. A

¹⁸ See also: A/HRC/37/55/Add.1 (19 January 2018).

¹⁹ Advancing Together (NGO), Summary Report to UNHCR of Security Incidents Affecting UNHCR's Persons of Concern, 18 June 2020.

²⁰ See: United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, [Report of the Secretary-General](#), 8 October 2021, S/2021/861 and Balkan Transitional Justice 2021. "[Kosovo Municipality Takes Serb Returnee Case to Court](#)".

²¹ UNDP Kosovo, [Public Pulse Brief XXI](#), 7 March 2022.

²² See: Institute on Religion and Public Policy Expert Panel on Religious Legislation and Implementation, 2006. Analysis of the Law on Freedom of Religion in Kosovo Adopted by the Assembly of Kosovo (10 October 2006), pp. 2, 6. See also: European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice

Commission), 2014. Opinion on the Draft Law on Amendment and Supplementation of Law No. 02/L-31 on Freedom of Religion of Kosovo (25 March 2014), p. 4, para. 12 (2014 Venice Commission Opinion). See also: Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (2013). [Third Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention in Kosovo](#) (10 June 2013), para. 90, CM (2013)60.

²³ US Department of State, "[2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Kosovo](#)," 21 May 2021.

²⁴ UN Human Rights Council, 2015. [Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Addendum: Mission to Serbia, including Kosovo](#), A/HRC/30/38/Add.1, 17 August 2015.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a **transitional justice strategy** are under development.



The lack of inclusive, comprehensive ‘Dealing with the Past’ approach hinders reconciliation

- 1,621 persons remain unaccounted for as a result of the conflict;
- A truth and reconciliation process and transitional justice strategy are pending.

18. **Impartial and credible justice** is crucial to sustainable reconciliation in Kosovo. War crime verdicts delivered by the international community between the end of the conflict in 1999 and the end of EULEX’s executive mandate in 2018 are limited. In 2015, the Hague-based hybrid Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) and Specialist Prosecutor’s Office (SPO) were established amid fierce political contestation to adjudicate allegations of serious crimes committed in Kosovo between 1 January 1999 and 31 December 2000 by or against “citizens of Kosovo or the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”. Current cases before the KSC include war crimes and crimes against humanity as well as alleged obstruction of official persons in performing official duties, witness intimidation, retaliation, and violation of the confidentiality of proceedings. The accused include Hashim Thaçi, who resigned as President of Kosovo when charges were confirmed in 2020. Intra-ethnic tensions may be fueled by these proceedings. The adjudication of war crimes

also continues in Kosovo. The government is establishing a **war crime institution** to collect information. In 2021, the Basic Court in Pristina sentenced a Serb to 10 years in prison for rape committed as a systemic attack on ethnic Albanian women during the conflict, the first local conviction for conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Efforts to uphold **rights to reparation** and address the **needs of survivors** under a **Commission for the Verification and Recognition of Sexual Violence Victim Status in Kosovo** are encouraging and helped grant 1,149 of 1,656 applicants legal status as survivors (March 2022), making them eligible for reparations. The process is not fully inclusive, as it omits cases that occurred in the aftermath of the conflict. The absence of non-majority communities in the verification and compensation process may lead to biases.



“We need to ensure that people believe in Kosovo’s recruitment system; that it is fair, inclusive and accountable. [H]ow can we convince foreign companies and investors to come to Kosovo if we do not believe in our own system ourselves?”

Civil Society Representative, CKA Reference Groups

19. Kosovo institutions have an **advanced legal and policy framework** aligned with the EU *acquis Communautaire*, but implementation lags.²⁵ The civil service is hindered by non-merit-based

²⁵ See: UNMIK 2020. [Civil Society Report on Human Rights in Kosovo in 2019](#).

recruitments²⁶ in the public sector and ad hoc decisions influenced by special interests.²⁷ The 2021 EC Progress Report on Kosovo cited: undue political influence over appointments and dismissals of senior



A central Commission is helping uphold the rights to reparation and address the needs of survivors of CRSV. 1,149 applicants have been granted legal status as survivors.

public officials and over the judiciary; proposals for extensive “vetting” of the judiciary and prosecution; slow progress on the investigation and prosecution of high-level corruption and organized crime; and political interference in law enforcement. Perceptions of corruption, in the 2021 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index,²⁸ show improvement coinciding with the new government’s efforts to address corruption.

20. While the integration of Kosovo-Serb judges, prosecutors and support staff into Kosovo’s judicial system formally concluded

Social and Economic Dimensions

21. Kosovo is a **multi-ethnic** society, with a majority ethnic K-Albanian population and sizeable non-majority populations. It has the **youngest population in Europe** with an estimated average age of 32.29 years in

in 2018, efforts are needed to ensure full functionality in Mitrovica.²⁹ The adoption of the **Law on the Disciplinary Liability of Judges and Prosecutors** and the increase in judicial staff in prosecution offices, courts, and the Special Prosecution Office in 2018 is expected to improve accountability, integrity, and efficiency. A major backlog of unresolved court cases, due to insufficient judges and administrative and translation staff, undermines justice; still, the 2014–2019 strategic plan of the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC) has progressed and a new strategic plan was announced for 2020–2022. A new mechanism was adopted for disciplinary proceedings against misconduct by judges and prosecutors, and the KJC and the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC) are working to implement it fully. A **Functional Review of the Rule of Law Sector** led to adoption of a Rule of Law Strategy and Action Plan in 2021, to increase integrity and performance of anti-corruption mechanisms, strengthen judiciary and prosecution, improve access to justice, human rights and gender equality protection, and reform the Ministry of Justice.

2019³⁰ (versus 43.9 years in the EU in 2020)³¹, and over half of the population

²⁶ UNDP Kosovo Public Pulse Project team 2019. [Public Pulse Brief XVI](#).

²⁷ EC, 2021. [Key findings of the 2021 Report on Kosovo](#).

²⁸ Kosovo improved 17 positions on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index 2021 published on 25 January 2022, ranking 87th of 180. Transparency International, [Corruption Perceptions Index 2021](#).

²⁹ Freedom House, 2018. [Nations in Transit 2018 – Kosovo](#).

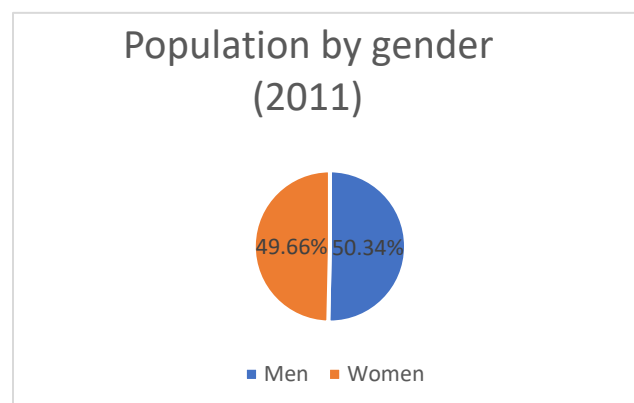
³⁰ KAS, [“Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Kosovo 2021”](#), p. 14. Note that updated population estimates (i.e. for 2020) cannot be officially disaggregated to provide information on average age or age clusters, but have been estimated by KAS.

³¹ UNDP, [Kosovo Human Development Report 2014](#). Eurostat, [“Are you younger or older than the median age in your region?”](#).

below 29.³² It has the region's highest population density, exceeding the EU,³³ with **62% in rural areas**.³⁴ The 2011 census shows a population of 1,739,825 including 92.9% K-Albanians, followed by K-Bosniaks (1.6%), K-Serbs (1.5%), K-Turkish (1.1%), K-Ashkali (0.9%) and K-Egyptian (0.7%), K-Gorani (0.6%) and K-Roma (0.5%).³⁵ Due to a partial boycott of the 2011 census by the K-Serb community, the figure does not include K-Serb residents from the northern Serb majority municipalities and cannot be deemed reliable for non-majority populations elsewhere. Life expectancy at birth in 2016 was 75.9 years for men and 81.6 years for women.³⁶ Based on the 2011 census, 95.6% identifies as Muslim, 2.2% Roman Catholic, and 1.4% Serbian Orthodox.³⁷ **Gender bias** is widespread and lends to preferences of sons.³⁸

22. More adolescents are entering working age, causing dependency rates³⁹ to fall, lending to an **early demographic dividend**, offering a brief opportunity for accelerated economic growth. To capitalise on this, effective policies must be implemented, with investments in human capital, labour market mobility, reduced barriers to female labour participation, strengthened

conditions for savings, and new job opportunities.⁴⁰ As elsewhere in the Western Balkans (albeit less urgently so),



Kosovo faces depopulation; the population is aging and shrinking. The Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) notes its population could fall to 1.49 million by 2061.⁴¹ A census due in 2021 is now planned for 2023 and could offer additional insight into current demographics.

23. **Youth** comprise over half of the population⁴² and face **high unemployment** (49.1% in 2020, with 33.6% of youth not in education, employment or training⁴³). The Strategy for Youth (2019–2023) shows 54% of youth not working in their chosen professions. High unemployment, a lack of social and economic opportunities and a mismatch of skills with market demands cause

³² UNDP, 2016. [Making the Labour Market Work for Women and Youth: Kosovo Human Development Report 2016](#).

³³ 165 inhabitants per square kilometer. See UN-Habitat, *2020 Western Balkans Regional Profile*—Draft pp. 11, 33.

³⁴ World Bank. *Republic of Kosovo - Systematic Country Diagnostic*. January 2017, pp. 99, 149.

³⁵ See [KAS Census, 2011](#): The population of Kosovo by ethnicity included: Albanians (92.9%); Bosniaks (1.6%); Serbs (1.5%); Turkish (1.1%); Askhali (0.9%); Egyptian (0.7%); Gorani (0.6%); and Roma (0.5%). Due to the partial boycott of the census by the K-Serb community, the estimate is not representative. [The OSCE municipal has profiles from 2018](#), including municipal demographic data.

³⁶ KAS, [Kosovo in Figures: 2020](#), p. 10. Estimated figures for 2016, see: Eurostat 2021. ["Basic figures on enlargement countries: Factsheets, 2021 edition"](#), p. 17.

³⁷ For further information, see: US Department of State, [Kosovo 2015 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

³⁸ Guilmo, Christophe Z., 2016. [Gender bias in Kosovo](#). UNFPA Kosovo, March 2016. The trend has resulted in an average sex ratio at birth in the period from 2002–2014 of 110-male births per 100 females.

³⁹ I.e. ratio of people outside working age to those inside of working age.

⁴⁰ UNICEF, *Kosovo is in its early Demographic Dividend Stage: A time sensitive opportunity*, 2016.

⁴¹ See Tim Judah, above. UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation of Women and Children in Kosovo*, 30 September 2019.

⁴² UNDP (2016). [Making the Labour Market Work for Women and Youth: Kosovo Human Development Report 2016](#).

⁴³ KAS (2021). [Labour Force Survey in Kosovo](#), 2020.



“Free movement is the biggest problem for young people, as we need a visa to travel to Europe. At our age, we are not able to see how our peers are living in other countries.”

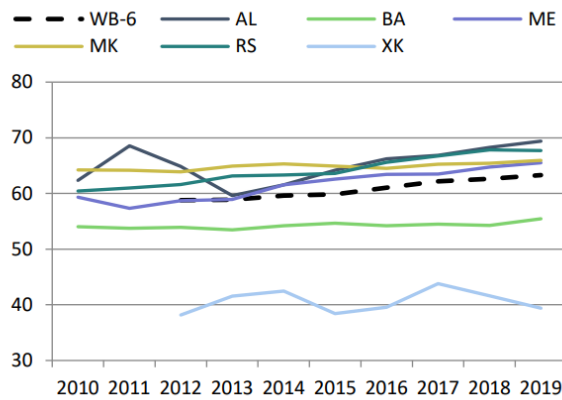
Youth Representative, CKA Focus Groups

disfranchisement⁴⁴ and outmigration.⁴⁵ The Action Plan on Increasing Youth Employment 2018–2020 stresses quality vocational training and alignment of education with the market to increase employability and self-employment.⁴⁶ Kosovo has committed to gradually establish, implement and enhance a local **Youth Guarantee Scheme**, an EU instrument

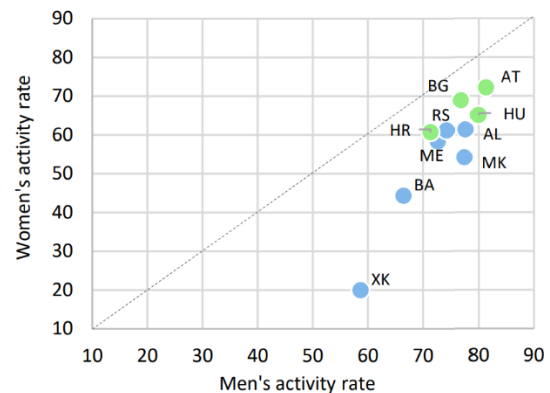
to ensure all people under 30 receive a quality offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of leaving education or becoming unemployed.⁴⁷ An **Implementation Plan** is expected by June 2022.

24. Absence of a common language, different educational systems, and self-imposed segregation between communities means over 70% of K-Albanian and K-Serb youth have never interacted.⁴⁸ All efforts to advance peace and security should involve young people in inter-ethnic trust-building, local governance and economic development. The **Youth, Peace and Security** agenda represented by Security Council resolutions 2250 (2018), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) offers ways to engage youth. However, only 13.6% of youth in Kosovo report taking part in any kind of civic activity in the past 12 months.⁴⁹

Western Balkan countries



Gender 2019 Q2



Left: Activity Rates (15–64 years) in %; Right: Gender disaggregated activity rates, 2019. XK = Kosovo
Source: Western Balkans, WIIW, 2020

44 Cojocaru, Alexandru, 2017. “Jobs Diagnostic Kosovo” in Jobs Series: Issue No 5, Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
45 Blerta Begisholli/BIRN, 2019. [Leaving Kosovo: Legal Migration Upsurge Causes Depopulation Fears](#). BIRN: 2019.
46 See: [Civil Society Report on Human Rights in Kosovo in 2019](#).

47 [Western Balkans Declaration on ensuring sustainable labour market integration of young people](#), 8 July 2021.
48 IOM. The Issue of Languages – [Communication among members of Serbian and Albanian Communities in Kosovo](#). Public Opinion Poll 2018.
49 UNDP, 2021. [Youth Perceptions on Peace in The Western Balkans](#).

25. Although **poverty trends** have declined, the upper middle-income poverty rate (\$5.5 in 2011 power purchasing parity [PPP]) increased by 2.5% in 2020 amidst the pandemic. Following the rebound in economic activity in 2021, the situation improved but remained at 20.9% in 2021.⁵⁰ Still, 18% was estimated to be below the consumption poverty line in 2017, 5.1% below the extreme poverty line. Those in rural areas,⁵¹ female-led households and children⁵² are disproportionately affected.
26. Kosovo has among the **weakest labour market in Europe**;⁵³ unemployment was 25.9% and employment 28.4% in 2020.⁵⁴ K-Roma and K-Ashkali communities face 90% unemployment with most in informal work.⁵⁵ Kosovo has the least female labour participation and the largest gender gap in the Western Balkans.⁵⁶ In 2020, 20.8% of women (56% of men) participated in the labour force, and women faced the highest unemployment (32.3%).⁵⁷ This is attributed to low salaries, scarce child and elderly care, need for family-friendly schedules, labour regulations (maternity leave costs), patriarchal norms and discrimination.⁵⁸
27. The average net wage in Kosovo in 2020 was higher in the public sector (EUR 552) and public companies (EUR 680), than the private sector (EUR 416),⁵⁹ with increases from 2019 in both (public: EUR 477; private: EUR 348). **Informal workers**, who perform **35% of jobs** (among the highest rate in Europe⁶⁰) often lack security and benefits, increasing vulnerability to shock.⁶¹ A United Nations assessment showed that construction and hospitality were hardest hit by the pandemic's economic shutdown in Kosovo and have the most employees paid in cash (83% construction; 47% hospitality). These sectors employ one fifth of Kosovo's household income earners.⁶² Other studies showed agriculture with the highest informality (70% of the workforce undeclared); roughly 60% of Kosovo's population lives in rural areas and relies on agriculture and farming.⁶³ Meanwhile, 30% of women in Kosovo's private sector work

⁵⁰ World Bank Group, '[Macro Poverty Outlook for Europe and Central Asia](#)', p. 61.

⁵¹ World Bank and KAS, 2019. [Consumption Poverty in the Republic of Kosovo](#). Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

⁵² UNICEF, 2019. [Analysis of the Situation of Women and Children in Kosovo](#).

⁵³ Regional Cooperation Council, [Labour Markets in the Western Balkans, 2019 and 2020](#), June 2021; World Bank Group and WIIW, [Western Balkans Labor Market Trends 2020](#), March 2020.

⁵⁴ KAS, [Labour Force Survey, 2020](#), p. 13.

⁵⁵ EC, 2021. [Key findings of the 2021 Report on Kosovo](#). P. 88.

⁵⁶ Regional Cooperation Council, [Labour Markets in the Western Balkans, 2019 and 2020](#), June 2021; World Bank Group and WIIW, [Western Balkans Labor Market Trends 2020](#), March 2020.

⁵⁷ EC, 2021. [Key findings of the 2021 Report on Kosovo](#).

⁵⁸ See World Bank Group. (2015). [Maternity Leave and Women's Labor Market Status in Kosovo: Five Key Messages](#). See also: Riinvest Institute. (2017). [Women in the Workforce: An Analysis of the Workforce Conditions for Women in Kosovo](#). See also: Democracy for Development,

2017. [Women's inactivity in the labour market: Factors hindering women's participation in the labor market](#), Pristina: 2017.

⁵⁹ KAS, 2021. [Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Kosovo 2021](#).

⁶⁰ World Bank, 2017. Jobs Diagnostic Kosovo, Jobs Series Issue No. 5. IMF estimates for 2016, using MIMIC estimations, put the informal sector at ~39% of GDP. See: Kelmanson, B., Kirabaeva, K., Medina, L., Mircheva, B., and J. Weiss 2019. [IMF Working Paper: Explaining the Shadow Economy in Europe: Size, Causes and Policy Options](#), WP/19/278. Riinvest notes 37% of the labour force is informal. See: Riinvest, FES, KFOS, 2013. [To Pay or Not to Pay: A Business Perspective of Informality in Kosovo](#). Pristina: Riinvest.

⁶¹ Cojocar, Alexandru, 2017. "[Jobs Diagnostic Kosovo](#)" in Jobs Series: Issue No 5, Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

⁶² [UNKT, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women, 2020. Rapid Kosovo Socio-Economic Impact Assessment, June 2020](#).

⁶³ Riinvest, FES, KFOS, 2013. [To Pay or Not to Pay: A Business Perspective of Informality in Kosovo](#), p. 8.

without a contract.⁶⁴ On the positive side, Kosovo experienced increased registration of informal workers to benefit from the government's COVID-19 response measures.⁶⁵ The Kosovo Pensions Savings Trust data shows that, of active contributors, formal employees increased by 9.7% in 2021 compared to 2020.⁶⁶

28. Kosovo is highly dependent on inflows from its diaspora via remittances and tourism (14.7 and 39% of GDP in 2021, respectively). Scarce opportunities and ethnic divisions hinder **non-majority community members and people on the move** from accessing **viable income-generating activities**.⁶⁷ An April 2020 needs assessment by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) found that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly and adversely impacted people on the move, further reducing employment and social interactions and increasing vulnerabilities. Reintegration support is only partially available for returnees and a referral system is not in place. The pandemic also exacerbated **pre-existing housing vulnerabilities** faced by marginalised communities. A January 2020 study found the majority of the K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities in Kosovo live in settlements, which are often informal with poor infrastructure and conditions.⁶⁸

Another study found marginalised K-Roma often live in overcrowded dwellings with less access to piped water, electricity and public sewerage than the non-Roma,⁶⁹ conditions that make it difficult to distance and practice good hygiene.⁷⁰ While 95% of households in K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities has access to basic drinking water, only 49% use safely managed drinking water sources that are accessible on premises, available when needed and free of contamination.⁷¹

29. Kosovo remains a transit territory for **migrants and refugees** along the Eastern Mediterranean route, with asylum claims fluctuating from 2,081 in 2018 to 578 in 2021, and 3,002 migrants and refugees, mostly single men, registered in 2020 decreasing to 1,487 in 2021. In 2020, Kosovo began issuing “certificates on intention to seek asylum”, allowing people on the move to legally stay in Kosovo for 72 hours. In August 2021, the authorities agreed to temporarily host Afghans fleeing the Taliban takeover. In 2021, they established a **Reception and Registration Centre** for vulnerable migrants. A **Strategy for Migration 2021–2025** and action plan were adopted in line with the Global Compact for Migration. Disagreements over Kosovo's status thwart efforts to combat **trafficking in persons and smuggling of**

⁶⁴ Riinvest, 2017. [Women in the Workforce: An Analysis of the Workforce Conditions for Women in Kosovo](#). Pristina: Riinvest.

⁶⁵ GAP Institute, [The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Labor Market](#), Pristina, June 2020. GAP Institute, [Unemployed in the Pandemic – A brief analysis of jobseekers and their profile for the period March 2020–February 2021](#), May 2021.

⁶⁶ Kosovo Pensions Saving Trust, ‘[Trustorja](#)’ (Q1–Q4 2021), p. 2.

⁶⁷ EC, 2018. [Annex to the Commission Implementing Decision amending Commission Decision C\(2014\)5772 of](#)

[20.8.2014 adopting the Indicative Strategy Paper for Kosovo* for the period 2014–2020](#).

⁶⁸ OSCE, 2020. [Overview of Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian Communities in Kosovo](#).

⁶⁹ UNDP and World Bank, 2018. [Regional Roma Survey 2017: Kosovo Fact Sheet](#).

⁷⁰ Müller, S., Tair, Fikrija, Ibishi, B., D. Gracanin, 2020. [Roma: Europe's Neglected Coronavirus Victims](#). BIRN: 1 April 2020.

⁷¹ KAS & UNICEF 2020. [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Kosovo Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#).

migrants. Data collection, analysis and border management capacities are needed.

30. **Migration out of Kosovo** has considerable impacts. From 2009 to 2020, EU countries issued over 280,000 first residence permits to residents of Kosovo (up 36.6% from 2019 to 2020), with Germany a key destination.⁷² According to a Riinvest and Forum 2015 study, over 30% of people of Kosovo have at least one family member living in the EU. Applications for work visas starkly increased when pandemic restrictions were lifted, with the German embassy receiving 56,639 applications in December 2021, 48,962 in January 2022.⁷³ Labour migration and the diaspora influence economic opportunities and generate welfare in Kosovo via **remittances and service exports at 14.7 and 18.9 of Kosovo's annual GDP in 2021**⁷⁴ and remittances accounted for 8% of individual income in 2020.⁷⁵ With more people choosing regular migration paths, irregular migration and asylum applications in EU countries decreased.⁷⁶ Regular migration pathways and improved capacities to address labour migration are needed, including policies to reduce exploitation and abuse of migrant workers, promote circular migration, and address skills mismatch. Unaccompanied children migrating to the EU are vulnerable to **smuggling**⁷⁷, and certain children in Kosovo are vulnerable to, e.g., forced begging. Labour emigration

reveals large-scale trafficking, exacerbated by the pandemic's economic impacts, with victims from Kosovo subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour in Europe. Marginalised K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities are vulnerable. While the Criminal Code punishes human trafficking and the government made efforts to protect victims,⁷⁸ prosecutions and convictions are few and corruption enables some trafficking crimes. Services for trafficking victims, provided by NGOs, rely on external funds.

31. Kosovo's **social protection system** is not fairly implemented and not affecting poverty. Its ability to respond rapidly to shock is undermined by a lack of unemployment insurance, rigid and narrow targeting criteria of social assistance, and a lack of registry of potential beneficiaries. As of December 2021, beneficiaries of social protection support were for retirement pension (66%), veteran benefits (17%), social assistance (9%), and disability allowances (8.5%).⁷⁹ Social services, decentralised at the municipal level, lack sustainable funding, quality and linkages with other sectors for social inclusion.⁸⁰ Its only poverty-targeted programme, the Social Assistance Scheme (SAS) reaches just 10% of households and excludes two thirds

⁷² Eurostat. [First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship.](#)

⁷³ See: Kallxo, [105 mijë e 601 aplikime për viza pune në Gjermani brenda dy muajve](#), 22 February 2022.

⁷⁴ Central Bank of Kosovo, 'Balance of Payments Time Series,' for [remittances](#), for [services/tourism](#). See also [KAS on Kosovo GDP for 2021](#).

⁷⁵ KAS. [Kosovo in Figures 2020](#), p. 50.

⁷⁶ Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2021, Kosovo Migration Profile, Pristina, Kosovo.

⁷⁷ See: European Commission 2017. "[Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The protection of children in migration.](#)" COM(2017) 211 final.

⁷⁸ US Department of State, 2019 [Trafficking in Persons Report: Kosovo](#).

⁷⁹ KAS 2022. [Social assistance percentages](#).

⁸⁰ Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Strategic Plan 2018–2022, Pristina, 2017.

of households at the bottom,⁸¹ and constituted a mere 0.45% of GDP in 2019,⁸² much lower than the regional average (2.2%) and the average in developing and transition economies (1.6%).⁸³ Categorical and exclusionary filters in the SAS eligibility process disincentivise job-seeking. In 2021, a finance agreement of EUR 47 million signed by the government with the World Bank to improve SAS efficiency and target poverty was not ratified in parliament in 2022, thus halting the reform process.⁸⁴

32. Similar limitations apply to Kosovo's **health system**, with low GDP expenditure per capita. Albeit mostly tax-funded (97% of general budget), private out-of-pocket payments comprise a significant share of contributions, leaving the most vulnerable disproportionately affected. Implementation of health insurance reform is delayed. The health impact of COVID-19 has been moderate, as authorities acted quickly to contain the spread with support from the international community. However, the re-direction of resources towards COVID-19 response and

containment measures limited or halted other essential health services.⁸⁵ Kosovo's **health-care indicators**, including the number of physicians and nurses per patient and the number of beds, are among the lowest in Europe,⁸⁶ and Kosovo has a severe shortage of qualified medical staff, notably in primary health centres. Institutional accountability has not increased, no incentives have been introduced to improve productivity, efficiency and quality in the health sector, and health inequalities persist. Kosovo's legislation is not aligned with the EU's *acquis*, Patients' Rights in Cross-border Healthcare (Directive 2011/24/EU).⁸⁷ Areas requiring attention include maternal, neonatal and child health,⁸⁸ sexual and reproductive health,⁸⁹ HIV prevention methods and transmission,⁹⁰ and cancer screening.⁹¹

33. While Kosovo's **education system** has experienced steady progress in access and enrolment, striking inequalities, low levels of school readiness and poor-quality education remain, hindering Kosovo's ability to leave no children behind. The law

⁸¹ World Bank, 2019. Kosovo Social Assistance Scheme Study: Assessment and Reform Options.

⁸² World Bank Group, "[Project Information Document – Kosovo Social Assistance System Reform Project](#)", p. 5.

⁸³ World Bank, 2017. Closing the Gap: The State of Social Safety Nets 2017.

⁸⁴ See: "[Nënshkruhet marrëveshja prej 47 milionë euro me Bankën Botërore për reformimin e skemës sociale](#)".

⁸⁵ WHO, [COVID-19 Deep Dive Action Brief](#), February 2021.

⁸⁶ See, for example: Eurohealth, [Health Care Reform in Kosovo](#), Vol 23 (1) 2017). Health-care indicators for Kosovo's children remain among the lowest in the region, pointing to gaps in access to and quality of care. Source; UNICEF Kosovo Programme, [Analysis of the Situation of Women and Children in Kosovo](#), 30 September 2019.

⁸⁷ EC Staff Working Document, [Kosovo 2021 Report](#).

⁸⁸ High infant mortality (KAS, 2013–2014 Kosovo MICS, Key Findings) and lack of official data on maternal deaths require focus on maternal, neonatal and child health (notably

among K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities), and data improvements.

⁸⁹ The MICS 2013–2014 showed 19% contraceptive prevalence among marginalised K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian women and high adolescent births (69/1,000 15–19-year-old girls). A lack of sex education for adolescents lends to low contraceptive use. See: SRHR in Kosovo: A reality beyond the law? A report on the National Assessment of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Dec. 2016.

⁹⁰ Kosovo has a low HIV infection rate but is at high risk (e.g. low knowledge of prevention methods and transmission). See: NIPHK 2017. Epidemiological Situation Report for HIV/AIDS/STI.

⁹¹ Registration of cancer-related deaths is incomplete due to gaps in the legal framework and administrative procedures in the civil registration system. Funding for systematic cancer screening is inadequate and reliable data on cancerous diseases is lacking. See: KAS & UNICEF, 2015. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2013–2014; Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women.

foresees equal educational opportunities for schoolchildren regardless of mother tongue and envisages the right of students from non-majority communities to be taught in their native languages through secondary school. Yet, K-Serb students wishing to study at university face non-recognition of diplomas issued by schools in the Serbian system.

34. Attendance in **early education** is very low; only 15% of children aged 3–4 years attend early education. The most vulnerable groups are those deprived of early education: Attendance is 9% among K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities, 8% in rural areas and 3% among the poorest quintile (42% in the richest).⁹² MESTI is drafting a **Law on Early Childhood Education (ECE)**, to expand quality, inclusive ECE. The strengthening of ECE is emphasised in the **Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (2022–2026)**, which is under development.
35. The poor quality of education is reflected in student performance in the 2015 and 2018 **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)** of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – the bottom of the developing world and last in the Western Balkans region,⁹³ likely worsened by school closures in the pandemic. Neither academic nor vocational education adequately prepares

students for participation in the labour market. Nearly half (49%) of youth of employment age (15–24 years) are unemployed, much higher than adults; around 34% are not in employment, education, or training (NEET).⁹⁴

36. COVID-19 measures challenged Kosovo’s economy due to **pre-existing fragility** and dependency on consumption. Precautionary measures shut down the economy for most of 2020. With services, tourism and trade (90% imported, 10% exported) impacted economic activity contracted by 5.3% in 2020⁹⁵ but rebounded at the end of 2020; the KAS, IMF and World Bank estimated recovery in 2021 at 10.5%,⁹⁶ 7.5%⁹⁷ and 7.1%⁹⁸, respectively.⁹⁹ Diaspora visits in 2021 surpassed 2019 levels, and consumption grew with fiscal stimulus measures. Exports experienced record growth in 2020 and 2021 (from 6% of GDP pre-pandemic to 10% in 2021). Forecasts for 2022 predict more modest growth (3.8¹⁰⁰–4.1%),¹⁰¹ if inflation is controlled. Inflation is expected to exceed 5% – the highest since 2011. These pressures could significantly increase with the war in Ukraine. The government recently took measures to respond to rising inflation, subsidising consumer loans, supporting farmers and raising select

⁹² KAS & UNICEF: [2020 MICS in Kosovo](#).

⁹³ OECD, 2020. [Education in the Western Balkans: Findings from PISA](#), PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁹⁴ KAS, 2021. [Labour Force Survey 2020](#).

⁹⁵ KAS. “[Gross Domestic Product by economic activities and expenditure approach, 2008–2020](#)”.

⁹⁶ KAS 2022. [National Accounts Statistics – Gross Domestic Product](#), 16 March 2022.

⁹⁷ IMF, 2021. [Article IV Consultations](#), January 2022.

⁹⁸ World Bank 2022. [Global Economic Prospects 2022](#), January 2022, p. 79.

⁹⁹ World Bank, “[Western Balkans Regular Economic Report: Fall 2021](#)”, p. 80. Note: World Bank estimates and projections for 2021–2023 will be updated by end-April 2022.

¹⁰⁰ IMF, [Article IV Consultations](#), January 2022.

¹⁰¹ World Bank, [Global Economic Prospects 2022](#), January 2022, p. 79.

pension schemes.¹⁰² To address these challenges, the EU's IPA III, expected to start in 2022, may help. The main financial tool for implementation of IPA III will be an "Economic and Investment Plan" for the Western Balkans (EUR ~9 billion in grants

funding), adopted by the EC in October 2020, to bridge the socioeconomic gap to the EU in transport, energy, digital transition, green agenda, private sector, economic integration, innovation and human capital development.

Environment and Climate Change

37. Rapid development in Kosovo since 1999 has **increased urbanisation** at an uncontrolled rate, causing infrastructure overload, traffic congestion, higher travel and carbon emissions, pollution and health impacts.¹⁰³ As of 2018, Kosovo's urban area comprised 1.5% of its territory (versus 0.9% in 2000).¹⁰⁴ Uncontrolled development has resulted in inadequate land use and increased informal and illegal housing, with most construction lacking permits or planning. As of 2015, there were 353,685 buildings across Kosovo without permits (excluding northern municipalities).¹⁰⁵ Continued growth of the urban population requires expansion of the built environment (housing, infrastructure). Spatial planning and development processes need to be integrated with environmental protection, efficient use of resources, infrastructure and services management, affordable housing, cultural and natural heritage, economic development, rural and regional development, disaster and risk response, resilience and climate action. In 2015, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing

encouraged the development of affordable housing over other uses of land.¹⁰⁶

38. Predominant coal dependency, lack of environmental law enforcement, poor waste management, unsustainable farming and rapid urbanization have caused **environmental pollution** and natural resource degradation, adversely impacting livelihoods and public health and undermining sustainable development. Two lignite-based power plants produce an estimated 98% of required electricity.¹⁰⁷ Monitoring and reporting have greatly improved since 2020, showing that **air pollution** in urban areas is sometimes equivalent to the world's most polluted cities.¹⁰⁸ UNICEF assessed wintertime concentrations in Kosovo to exceed vastly WHO levels to maintain and protect health.¹⁰⁹ Air pollution disproportionately affects pregnant women, individuals with respiratory diseases, and children. The economic cost of air pollution in 2016 is estimated at 2.5–4.7% of GDP.¹¹⁰

¹⁰² Kosovo TwoPointZero, [One Year of Kurti's Government: How is it Going?](#), 22 March 2022.

¹⁰³ MESP. 2018. Climate Change Strategy 2019–2028, p. 38.

¹⁰⁴ ISP/MESP. 2018. Growth of urban areas in Kosovo's municipalities 2000–2018, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ ISP/MESP. 2017. Indicators for Spatial Planning in Kosovo, p. 112.

¹⁰⁶ Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living,

and on the right to non-discrimination in this context on her mission to Serbia and Kosovo*, A/HRC/31/54/Add.2.

¹⁰⁷ World Bank, 2019. Air Pollution Management in Kosovo, World Bank report, October 2019.

¹⁰⁸ See: USA Today, "[Tiny nation of Kosovo has air pollution so bad that it rivals Beijing](#)".

¹⁰⁹ UNICEF, 2019. [Impact of Air Pollution on Health and Measures to Reduce Exposures in Kosovo](#), November 2019.

¹¹⁰ World Bank, 2019. Air Pollution Management in Kosovo, World Bank report, October 2019.

39. The majority of **rivers are polluted** and the public water supply has had evidence of contamination, largely from bacteria.¹¹¹ **Water management** is poor. No municipalities and few industries have wastewater treatment facilities; thus, untreated wastewater is discharged into surface water bodies. Connection to public water systems is ~69.6¹¹²–89.6%¹¹³; an estimated 0.7¹¹⁴–10.41%¹¹⁵ are without water supply. People in rural areas, particularly women and marginalised communities,¹¹⁶ regularly express concern about insufficient access to water.
40. Kosovo has seven regional landfills, but **solid waste management** is limited. Collection is functional in major cities but not all communities, resulting in unregulated landfills. The safe disposal of protective equipment potentially infected with COVID-19 is a concern, particularly due to uncontrolled dumping and related health risks or uncontrolled incineration and the resultant toxins.¹¹⁷ There are no incineration facilities for solid waste or landfills for hazardous waste, and fires occur in unregulated landfills. In 2021, the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (MESPI) finalised an Integrated Waste Management Strategy 2021–2030¹¹⁸ and, in 2022, with UNDP support, began a Circular Economy Roadmap for Kosovo.
41. According to MESPI, **environmental hotspots** result from past industrial activities (mining, unmanaged landfills, poor waste management, improper separation of hazardous/non-hazardous waste) with concerns for public health.¹¹⁹ Effective contaminated site management is vital for a real estate market that can recycle land, reduce greenfield use, and create business and entrepreneurship opportunities.
42. The Western Balkans is emerging as a “warming hot spot” due to **climate change**. Reliant on rain-fed agriculture, Kosovo risks more heatwaves, reduced rainfall and resultant climate shocks.¹²⁰ Anticipated temperature increases (depending on greenhouse gas reduction) impact water resources, food production and human health.¹²¹ Kosovo is advancing its agenda on climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR) via adoption of strategies and action plans and establishment of a **Climate Change Council** in 2022 to coordinate climate action, support joining international environmental conventions, design climate actions, and advance the EU Green Agenda and 2030 Agenda. The Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency (KEPA) is mandated to monitor and report on the environment, maintain quality of air, water, soil and biodiversity, and promote renewable energy and sustainable natural resource use. The **Strategy for**

¹¹¹ The World Bank: *Kosovo Kosovo Environmental Analysis*; January 2013.

¹¹² KAS. [Kosovo Water Statistics](#) 2015.

¹¹³ KAS. [Water Statistics](#) 2017.

¹¹⁴ KAS. [Kosovo Water Statistics](#) 2015.

¹¹⁵ KAS. [Water Statistics](#) 2017.

¹¹⁶ UNDP and World Bank, [Regional Roma Survey 2017: Kosovo Face Sheet](#), April 2018. See also para. 28 above.

¹¹⁷ UNEP Factsheet, [Introduction to COVID-19 waste management](#), April 2020.

¹¹⁸ Government of the Republic of Kosovo, 2021. [Kosovo Integrated Waste Management Strategy \(2021–2030\) and Action Plan \(2021–2023\)](#), QRK-08/14-STR.

¹¹⁹ Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency, *The state of waste and chemicals report*, 2014, pp. 47–48.

¹²⁰ UN-Habitat Kosovo. 2021. [Municipal capacity gaps and needs on integrating climate change aspects into spatial planning in Kosovo](#).

¹²¹ See: Regional Cooperation Council, 2018. [SEE2020 Series: Study on Climate Change in the Western Balkans Region](#).

Environmental Protection 2013–2022 and Strategy and Action Plan for Climate Change 2019–2028 support environmental sustainability; the NDS currently being developed prioritises sustainable development.¹²² Low participation of women in the energy and waste management sectors, especially in decision-making roles, hinders progress. The gender-responsiveness of government measures is limited by the lack of a monitoring, reporting, and verification system with obligations to report on gender, as well as: gender norms, a lack of disaggregated data on energy and environmental sectors, and underrepresentation of women in public consultations.¹²³ MESPI conducted prior gender analyses, but these are not updated.¹²⁴

43. Kosovo is not a signatory to international environmental conventions, like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, **limiting access to vertical funding mechanisms** (Global Environmental Facility and its Small Grants Programme, Green Climate Fund) and hindering environmental protection, civil society capacity-building, and a unified regional approach. The United Nations has been seeking to facilitate ways for Kosovo to engage, despite not being a member state. Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality is preparing Kosovo’s first Voluntary Local Review, highlighting areas needing urgent action in favour of the 2030 Agenda, policy

coherence and strategic planning for sustainable development.

44. Kosovo has no natural gas or oil refinery; renewables are limited. Its energy is mostly derived from two “outdated, inadequate and undependable” coal plants.¹²⁵ Regular power cuts disincentivise investors and disrupt essential services. Many residents rely on firewood and coal. Kosovo has traditionally relied on electricity imports to meet demand peaks. Increased international energy prices combined with the unexpected shutdown of Kosovo’s power plants led to an unprecedented energy crisis at the end of 2021. In early 2022, import prices were seven times higher than in 2021. Poorer households (single elderly; moderate poor and female-headed households; households not covered by social assistance) are more vulnerable and may reduce other consumption (food, health, education). A quarter (25.4% [15.8%]) of Kosovo households are energy (electricity) poor (over 10% of budget spent on energy).¹²⁶ Kosovo saw exponential growth in cryptocurrency mining, especially in northern Kosovo where K-Serbs have not paid for electricity in decades. Pristina estimates annual costs at EUR 12 million, hindering the Dialogue. The government banned cryptocurrency mining in 2022, and Kosovo police conducted raids to seize machinery.
45. Finding efficient, sustainable and affordable energy solutions is a challenge. The “Kosovo E Re” project, under discussion since 2015,

¹²² UN-Habitat Kosovo & MESPI. 2021. [Symposium Report: The future of territorial planning in Kosovo](#), p. 6.

¹²³ KWN: [2018 Kosovo Gender Analysis](#) and [2021 Brief Gender Profile](#).

¹²⁴ MESP, Institutional Gender Analysis, 2017. KWN, [Budgeting for a Better Environment](#), 2016 and 2017.

¹²⁵ World Bank, “[Energy in Kosovo](#)”.

¹²⁶ World Bank, [Poverty and Distributional Analysis of Electricity Poverty and Protection of Vulnerable Customers in Kosovo](#), 1 November 2019.

intended to replace Kosovo's older coal-fired power plants and meet around half of Kosovo's electricity demand, but has been on hold since 2020 due to criticism for large financial and environmental costs.¹²⁷ A proposed extension of the Trans-Adriatic gas pipeline via Greece and North Macedonia was suspended in 2021. However, the government has been looking at alternative agreements with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) for a EUR 200 million investment focusing on women in the energy sector and high-capacity battery energy storage;¹²⁸ with EBRD for energy efficiency projects in Pristina and Prizren; with Germany's *Kreditanstalt fuer Wiederaufbau (KfW)* for investments in solar district heating and photovoltaics, hoped to be "one of the largest solar power plants in Europe" adding 70 MW capacity to Pristina's heating system;¹²⁹ and with investors from

Germany, Israel¹³⁰ and Kosovo with support from EBRD to build Kosovo's first wind energy park that was inaugurated in 2022 with the aim to cover 10% of Kosovo's energy needs.¹³¹ The government has announced its intention to draft a new **Energy Strategy 2022–2031** focusing on sustainable energy and air quality; a working group was formed at the end of 2021.

46. The **Green Agenda for the Western Balkans** (in the EU Economic and Investment Plan of 2020, endorsed by Western Balkans leaders at the 2020 Sofia summit),¹³² a new growth strategy aligned with the European Green Deal, focuses on: climate action; circular economy; biodiversity; pollution; and sustainable food systems. A regional approach to infrastructure management and planning is vital for decarbonisation.

2. KOSOVO'S VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

47. Kosovo's commitment to the 2030 Agenda was validated unanimously by the Kosovo Assembly in 2018 via a resolution on SDGs and operationalisation of a Sustainable Development Council to monitor and ensure SDG implementation. Kosovo's NDS 2016–2021¹³³ focused on: human capital; rule of law and good governance; and competitive industries and infrastructure. The first report on results revealed progress



¹²⁷ Prishtina Insight, "[World Bank will not support new coal power plant in Kosovo](#)," 10 October 2018.

¹²⁸ [Cabinet Decisions](#), 23 March 2022.

¹²⁹ Prishtina Insight, "[Kosovo Hails Solar Energy Project as Potential Game Changer](#)," 28 March 2022.

¹³⁰ Of note also that Israel and Kosovo established diplomatic ties in February 2021.

¹³¹ Prishtina Insight, "[New Wind Park Hailed as Step Towards Green Energy](#)," 11 March 2022.

¹³² EC, "[Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans](#)," 6 October 2020. [Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans](#), 10 November 2020.

¹³³ [NDS 2016–2021](#).

in 25% of related activities¹³⁴ but did not explicitly cite the SDGs or how they could drive reforms. Indicators in the NDS were aligned with 12 SDGs and 21 targets. A UNKT rapid integrated assessment of 46 central and sectoral Kosovo development planning strategies found the framework converged with 51% of SDG targets (87 of 169 targets). The NDS 2030, under development, provides an opportunity to reinforce commitment to implementation of the 2030 Agenda and focuses on: sustainable economic growth; human development; security and rule of law; and governance and institutional reform. The drafting process is expected to finish in 2022.

48. The **EU integration agenda** is a key incentive for development and reform. The SAA, effective 1 April 2016, represents a first step towards European integration,¹³⁵ requiring alignment with applicable EU standards through socioeconomic, political and economic reforms. Within the European Reform Agenda (ERA), a high-level dialogue between the government and the EC, Kosovo is working towards these reforms with 22 measures across three pillars: good governance and rule of law; competitiveness and investment climate; and employment and education. Its Economic Reform Programme harmonises sectoral strategies under one common budgetary framework. Kosovo is committed to seek a stable macroeconomic environment, inclusive growth and a functioning rule of law and adopted the

European Reform Agenda (ERA 2) and its Action Plan in 2021. The **EU integration agenda and the 2030 Agenda are closely linked and complementary**. UNKT analysis of alignment of Kosovo development priorities (alignment of European integration agenda documents with the SDGs) reflects this complementarity and reveals opportunities to increase synergies.¹³⁶ The analysis showed the strongest convergence of Kosovo's development priorities with SDG targets in: quality education; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; peace, justice and strong institutions and partnerships for the goals (SDGs 4, 7, 8, 16), and minimal convergence in poverty reduction, life on land and life below water (SDGs 1, 14, 15).

Report/Initiative	% of Alignment with SDGs
2019 Kosovo Report (<i>EC assessment of Kosovo's progress towards European agenda requirements</i>)	63.9
Economic Reform Programme	47.5
NDS 2016-2021	29.6

49. The COVID-19 pandemic hindered Kosovo's progress towards sustainable development, and deepened inequalities. Despite the government's urgent fiscal measures and the United Nations' two-year Socio-Economic Response Plan on COVID-19, medium-term measures are needed.

3. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE 2030 AGENDA

¹³⁴ Prime Minister's Office 2018. [First report on the implementation and results of the National Development Strategy 2016–2021](#).

¹³⁵ See: [Stabilisation and Association Agreement](#) between the EU and Kosovo. 27 October 2015.

¹³⁶ UNKT, [Rapid Integrated Assessment: Policy Alignment and Data Availability for the SDGs in Kosovo](#), 2021.

50. High-quality, reliable and internationally comparable disaggregated data is vital to



“We in Kosovo do not have a ‘clear vision’ or a set of measures or a public discourse about where we are heading the next 4 years nor 10 or 50 years.”

CSO Representative, CKA Reference Groups

policy and decision-making and to measure progress with the 2030 Agenda. Generation of such data in Kosovo is challenged by few standardised definitions and methodologies, little disaggregated or incomplete data, a lack of time series data to monitor progress, weak coordination, no central repository for monitoring, and insufficient human and financial resources. Local monitoring is hindered by a lack of age-specific population projections in municipalities.

Availability of SDG-related indicators:		
42% No data	33% Exact or Relevant Data	25% Tier III / Not Relevant / Other

51. A UNKT data availability mapping showed 33% of SDG indicators for Kosovo, no data available for 42%, and ~25% tier III or irrelevant to Kosovo.¹³⁷ Review of Kosovo’s

4. LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

53. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, United Nations Member States pledged to “leave no one behind” (LNOB) and “to reach

progress on the SDGs, thus, is limited to targets where data is available. When analysed by SDG, data availability varies: almost no data for SDGs 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14; significant data gaps for SDGs 2, 6, 9 and 15. Kosovo’s development framework converged with 51% of SDG targets. The NDS Progress Report shows implementation delays in over half of all planned activities, issues with planned funding versus actual costs, and NDS objectives achieved in 14% of SDG targets, some progress on 43%, no data on 24%, and no progress on 19%. International sources that track SDG progress reveal a similar lack of data or Kosovo’s exclusion altogether due to its status under Security Council resolution 1244.

52. EUROSTAT data for Kosovo is limited to SDGs 3, 8 and 17 but provides relevant insight on Kosovo: Among the seven enlargement candidates and potential candidates EUROSTAT tracks, Kosovo had the: highest neonatal mortality rate (8.7 deaths/1,000 live births, albeit below the United Nations target of 12/1,000 live births); highest unemployment among men, women and youth; largest gender gap in unemployment; and youngest persons under 27 years NEET.¹³⁸

the furthest behind first”. This requires explicit action to end extreme poverty, curb inequalities and confront discrimination, to

¹³⁷ UN Kosovo Team. Rapid Integrated Assessment on Mainstreaming SDGs into National Plans. 2018–2019 (unpublished).

¹³⁸ EUROSTAT, [Enlargement countries -indicators for Sustainable Development Goals](#), February 2020.

ensure projects and services leave no one behind. Five factors drive exclusion: 1) **Discrimination** (on the basis of assumed or ascribed identity or status); 2) **Geography** (e.g. isolation, risk or exclusion due to location, including environmental degradation, transport and technology); 3) **Vulnerability to shocks** (e.g. conflict, climatic, environmental); 4) **Governance** (e.g. laws, policies, institutions, voice, participation); and 5) **Socioeconomic status** (e.g. multidimensional poverty, inequalities). Often, these factors intersect. To identify the people and groups in Kosovo left behind or at risk of being left behind, the UNKT organized a desk review and consultations in late 2019 and again in early 2022. Over 460 people were consulted via institutions, civil society, think tanks and international partners and via focus groups with people prone to vulnerable situations. Five of seven 2022 consultations¹³⁹ were

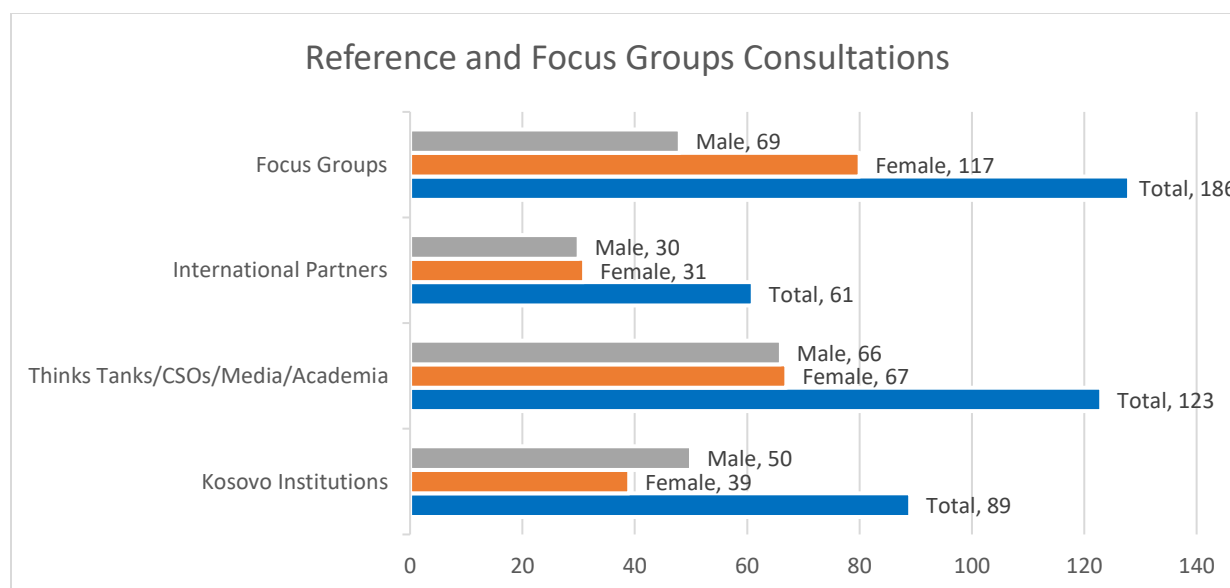
held outside Pristina to reach at-risk groups. Findings suggest those most at risk of being left behind are: certain **categories of women** (women from non-majority communities or rural areas, single mothers, domestic violence survivors, those excluded from participation); **children** (with disabilities, in economically deprived households); **non-majority communities**;¹⁴⁰ **people on the move** (asylum seekers, refugees, migrants, IDPs¹⁴¹, voluntary returnees); **people with disabilities**; and **LGBTQI+ persons**. Factors causing exclusion, including those due to the pandemic, were examined. Key themes were: COVID-19 impact and access to services; economic security and livelihoods; access to education, health and social services; discrimination; security and gender-based violence; mental health and well-being; caretaking and work-life balance.

¹³⁹ The 2022 consultations (restricted due to COVID-19) reached 58 people (37 women; 36 from non-majority communities).

¹⁴⁰ The UNKT recognises the K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities as three distinct communities, but the report covers all three communities as they generally face similar challenges with inclusion in society. In municipalities where members of more than one of the

communities live, effort is made to disaggregate the data and differentiate between the communities.

¹⁴¹ Regulation on the Return of Displaced Persons and Durable Solutions, No. 01/2018 defines displaced person in Art. 3.1.4 as “person who was forced to leave or forced to abandon his/her place of residence between 28 March 1998 and 31 March 2004, particularly as result or in order to avoid effects of armed conflict, situation of general violence, human rights violations”.



Discrimination and Inequality

54. Discrimination leads to **exclusion, bias or mistreatment** in laws, policies, and access to public services, violating human rights, obstructing SDG achievement, and risking leaving some behind. Those most at risk of being left behind are also those most at risk of discrimination and unequal access to services. In a recent survey,¹⁴² 57% of respondents were unaware of the **Law on Protection from Discrimination**; 40% had little/no trust at all in Kosovo institutions to protect them from discrimination. Despite de jure equality in the **Law on Gender Equality** and the **Law on Protection from Discrimination**, de facto discrimination against women and girls persists. The unresolved Dialogue further isolates Kosovo residents and institutions from regional and global participation. Reference groups highlighted discrimination throughout society, particularly: economic inequalities,

especially in employment and access to resources; family planning; unpaid work; family care; property ownership; pay gaps; hindered access to entrepreneurship opportunities; and traditional and patriarchal values. Issues included the importance of strengthening social cohesion, especially among youth, and improving access to jobs and public services (education, health care, affordable and adequate housing, safe water supply, waste collection schemes). Officials require capacities and awareness to reduce discrimination. Two Special Rapporteurs in the United Nations special procedure mechanisms recommended measures to combat discrimination against women, minorities, and LGBTQI+ persons, improve enjoyment of cultural rights for people with disabilities,¹⁴³ eliminate de facto discrimination in housing against women

¹⁴² Survey on discrimination patterns in Kosovo*, Nov. 2020, supported by the EU-CoE action on promotion of diversity and equality.

¹⁴³ Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, A/HRC/37/55/Add.1, 19 January 2018.

and girls, and devise policies to guarantee the right to adequate housing without discrimination on any grounds.¹⁴⁴

Geography

55. Communities in Kosovo face different types and degrees of hardship depending on location. Some areas are prone to higher poverty, lower quality of life, and less access to services. Communities in rural or remote areas face compounding disadvantages. Municipalities have varied access to, and **poor infrastructure for, health, DRR, education and social services**, compounded by a lack of data hindering development from reaching those most in need in remote areas. Social and cultural norms and stigma around health, family planning and social care may further limit potential to improve household economy and fight poverty.
56. Compared to the urban population, rural communities face **disparities in living conditions**, such as **unequal access to public utilities** (public drinking water supply, sewage system, waste management, central heating, transportation), and **unequal income and consumption patterns**. In 2013, about 95% of the *urban* population was estimated to be connected to the public water system, while half of the *rural* population obtained drinking water from wells or improvised sources. Connection to a wastewater sewage system in urban areas was 90% and, in rural areas, it was 30%. One

in 10 rural households had no sanitation, versus one in 1,000 urban households.¹⁴⁵ Rural areas are more prone to **environmental risks**.

57. With increasing **rural-to-urban migration** due to better living conditions and greater economic, health, education, social and cultural opportunities in cities, demand for affordable housing is increasing in urban areas.¹⁴⁶ Many families live in collective shelters or informal settlements with substandard housing conditions. Despite promises to invest in the sector, only 0.3% of the total stock of apartments in Kosovo are available for social housing. While MESPI is responsible for implementing legislation on adequate housing and overseeing central strategies, municipalities are responsible for the provision of social housing. Nearly half have not conducted a housing needs assessment and only 12 have officers dealing with social welfare and social housing. Nearly all (95%) of municipalities cite a lack of finance as the largest constraint.¹⁴⁷ In line with the 2016 report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, the international community in Kosovo, particularly donors, should: allocate resources to housing programmes, based on

¹⁴⁴ Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context on her mission to Serbia and Kosovo, A/HRC/31/54/Add.2.

¹⁴⁵ Rukovci, E. 2016. [The rural-urban divide in Kosovo](#), referencing KAS, *Socio-Economic Data by municipalities, 2013*. p. 18.

See also: KAS. [Kosovo Water Statistics 2015](#). Compare with KAS. [Water Statistics 2017](#).

¹⁴⁶ ISP/MESP. 2017. Indicators for Spatial Planning in Kosovo, pp. 121–122. See also: MLGA. 2016. Report of the Performance of Municipalities – 2015, p. 14. Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo, [Annual Report 2019](#), p. 72.

¹⁴⁷ UN-Habitat Kosovo Office, Feasibility study for the adequate social housing programme for Kosovo, draft (March 2022).

a needs assessment inclusive of neglected populations; design and implement programmes in full consultation with community members; ensure project locations do not segregate or isolate communities; and align long-term, durable housing solutions with international human

rights law and standards.¹⁴⁸ Rural-to-urban migration has also caused depopulation of rural settlements, especially mountainous settlements and settlements close to borders and administrative boundary lines, further isolating those communities.

Governance

58. The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index for 2021¹⁴⁹ shows improvement in public perceptions on corruption in Kosovo, mirrored by the Public Pulse opinion poll of May 2021¹⁵⁰ and UNKT consultations. The Anti-Corruption Agency's **Anticorruption Strategy (2021–2023)** for the political sector, state administration and local governance, law enforcement and judiciary, and public procurement and public finance management, aims to: increase integrity, responsibility and transparency in state administration bodies and strengthen trust in public institutions, improve legislation and strengthen institutional capacities to prevent and fight corruption, and raise public awareness.
59. Court trials often face **delays** and court decisions, at times, are **ineffectively enforced**, which hampers the delivery of justice. Delays were exacerbated by limited court operations during the COVID-19 response.¹⁵¹ Limited implementation of Public Administration Reform constrain implementation of strategies and laws, inhibiting good governance. Strengthening

the efficiency, accountability and transparency of the judicial and prosecutorial system requires consideration of the **Rule of Law Strategy**, judicial/prosecutorial reforms and efficacy



“Government officials avoid sharing information because of the fear of being over-watched for corruption. This makes them [be] perceived as non-professional.”

CSO Representative, CKA Reference Groups

of Judicial and Prosecutorial Councils. The **Case Management Information System (CMIS)** and a centralised criminal record system are also needed.

60. The government's two main electoral promises on anti-corruption – vetting of the judiciary, and civil confiscation of unexplained wealth – are progressing, despite some reservations among international actors. While the government has experienced challenges agreeing on the issue of vetting, work has been ongoing

¹⁴⁸ [Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context on her mission to Serbia and Kosovo*](#), A/HRC/31/54/Add.2, 26 February 2016.

¹⁴⁹ Kosovo improved 17 positions on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2021 published

on 25 January 2022, ranking 87th out of 180. Transparency International, [Corruption Perceptions Index 2021](#).

¹⁵⁰ [UNDP Public Pulse Brief XX](#), May 2021.

¹⁵¹ See: [Kosovo Judicial Council, 24 March 2020](#).

within the Ministry of Justice to address concerns through consultations.

61. Inefficient public procurement – irregularities, nepotism, fraud, and patronage – hinder progress. Residents and civil society find corruption reduces limited public resources for service delivery, undermines public confidence in government, and deters foreign investment. Central and municipal institutions, with support from international partners, put in place accountability and oversight mechanisms to address these issues.
62. The **Public Procurement Regulatory Commission (PPRC)** adopted electronic procurement and expanded the functionality of the e-Procurement platform, economic operators submit their bids online, and contracting authorities must publish procurement contract data on the electronic platform. Improvements are visible in procurement activities, including through an e-Procurement platform and an e-Appeals module. The Open Procurement Transparency Portal (OPTP), a civil society-led portal, offers additional accountability and transparency, automatically collecting data from the e-procurement platform and presenting it in a user-friendly way, allowing researchers to explore links between public money, agencies, and private sector contractors and to identify unusual patterns that may denote fraud or corruption.
63. Kosovo is advancing towards a **digital transformation**.¹⁵² Connectivity is growing, with over 85% Internet penetration and 90% 3G/4G coverage.¹⁵³ Government

digitalisation is embedded in decision-making, with administrative acts codified. Initial policies and laws are in place, and cross-sector collaboration and seed financing initiated. The population has high digital literacy, and online financial transactions are being introduced. The gender divide in access to technology, Internet and e-services, remote work, STEM studies, entrepreneurship and employment are important considerations, as well as the vulnerability of women to cyber violence. The lack of gender-disaggregated data impedes related progress. To advance digital transformation, financial support schemes are needed for start-up businesses, facilitation of data exchange needs, and digital inclusion. A Digital Agenda 2030 is being drafted by the government.

64. Employees in the **public sector** had decreased, as of September 2021, to 80,659¹⁵⁴ from 83,789 in 2019.¹⁵⁵ Only 24% of residents perceive employment as merit-based. An equal percentage (24%) believe education, vocational training, and professional experience are needed.¹⁵⁶ There are concerns with the eligibility for public sector employment of those educated in the Serbian system, due to a lack of agreement on recognition of certificates. The **Law on Public Officials** was approved by the Assembly in 2019 to create a legal basis for employment linked to merit, moral integrity, impartiality and sustainability. The Law on Public Salaries was declared unconstitutional, and the government intends to draft a new law in 2022. According to the 2009 Law on

¹⁵² UNDP Kosovo, [Digital Readiness Assessment](#), 2021.

¹⁵³ DataReportal, [Internet Users in Kosovo](#), February 2020.

¹⁵⁴ Ministry of Finance. [Budget 2021 \(see Annex 2\)](#), p. 18.

¹⁵⁵ Ministry of Finance. [Budget 2019 \(see Annex 15\)](#), p. 82.

¹⁵⁶ [UNDP Public Pulse Brief XX](#), May 2021.

- Vocational Ability, Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities, employers (including state administration and the public sector) must employ one person with disabilities for every 50 employees or pay a monthly fee. With 2022 the “Year of Persons with Disabilities”, Prime Minister Kurti issued a decision obliging public bodies to increase their quota in compliance with the law, which has not been implemented to date.
65. ***Policy coherence and inter-institutional coordination*** (vertical and horizontal) pose governance challenges. Institutional coordination relies on vested personal networks of representatives at central and local levels and less on clearly defined procedures. Without strong communication and information-sharing between local and central institutions, implementation of strategies and laws, including monitoring and evaluation, performance will lag. Focus groups identified mixed responsibilities, interests of certain groups, a lack of regular monitoring and accountability, and limited capacities as key constraints. Nepotism also hampers performance and accountability.
66. Overlapping mandates of institutions and mechanisms, inefficient institutional coordination, limited capacity, low budget allocation, weak accountability, limited political will, and absence of appropriate data collection to enable evidence-based policy development, hinder Kosovo’s progress on human rights. Despite approval in 2021 of the [Program for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2021–2025](#) and Action Plan 2021–2023, Kosovo lacks a comprehensive human rights strategy to incorporate existing human rights policies and laws into one document and prevent potential fragmentation of efforts.
67. This is exemplified in Kosovo’s legal framework to **protect victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**. In 2020, a constitutional amendment was adopted, making the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) directly applicable in Kosovo, and institutions began aligning Kosovo’s legal framework. In 2022, a [Strategy on Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women for 2022–2026](#) was adopted; a **Law on Domestic Violence** is being developed. The Strategy covers survivor prevention, protection, reintegration and empowerment, perpetrator accountability and rehabilitation, and institutional cooperation. There is only one Medical Forensic Institute in Kosovo for victims of sexual violence and no rape crisis or sexual referral centres. Difficulties are reported in obtaining institutional protection. Women survivors can seek legal advice and assistance through an [Online Legal Aid Platform](#) launched in 2021. In 2019, a [database for domestic violence cases](#) was launched to enable monitoring, prosecution and accountability.
68. Kosovo’s legislation provides greater legal rights to **property ownership** in line with constitutional commitments to guarantee internationally recognised rights, such as the equal right to property prescribed by international laws and policies (CEDAW, Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR], International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR]).

69. Kosovo has a comprehensive legal framework for the **protection of women, children with disabilities and non-majority communities**. The CoE Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCPNM) has direct applicability and supports protection by promoting equality in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life and by creating conditions for them to express, preserve and develop their culture, religion, language and traditions. Legislation guarantees community rights through the **Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members in Kosovo** and the **Law on the Use of Languages**, requiring institutions to provide public services in all official languages and the Language Commissioner to serve as safeguard. There is increasing interest among communities, notably young people, to learn **official languages**.¹⁵⁷ A VocUP language learning platform and online Serbian-Albanian and Albanian-Serbian dictionary are supported by the United Nations. Other steps include 2021 re-accreditation of the Balkanistics Study Programme and establishment of a University of Pristina Language Centre. Still, United Nations monitoring found dissemination of information on the pandemic in Serbian delayed. Consistency is needed for understanding and cohesion.
70. There are challenges in the protection of the **rights of persons deprived of liberty**. According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, numerous and consistent allegations of torture and ill-treatment during police interrogations reveal an entrenched pattern of abuse.¹⁵⁸ The **2018 Report** calls for accessible, fully independent, expedient and effective complaints, oversight and investigative mechanisms for prevention, investigation and prosecution of abuse by police, prison staff, government officials.¹⁵⁹ The 2020 CoE Committee for the Prevention of Torture, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment visit¹⁶⁰ revealed allegations of ill-treatment in psychiatric establishments and corruption at Dubrava prison.
71. The right to health in Kosovo is protected by law,¹⁶¹ and legislation protects reproductive rights and regulates the provision of related health services.¹⁶² Access to **basic health care** is free but diagnostic services and medication are not. Reliance on private out-of-pocket



“Sexual and Reproductive Health is a hot topic always; prejudice comes from all over the society and we do not know who to talk to.”

CSO Representative, CKA Reference Groups

¹⁵⁷ IOM, [VocUp official language courses: Perception analysis of course participants](#), July 2020.

¹⁵⁸ The [Special Rapporteur’s report](#).

¹⁵⁹ OHCHR: Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment A/HRC/40/59/Add.1, 21 December 2018.

¹⁶⁰ See: CoE, 2021. [“Report to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo \(UNMIK\) on the visit to Kosovo*...”](#).

¹⁶¹ Law no. 04 / L-125 on Health protects the right to equal access in health care. Law no. 2004/38 on the *Rights and Responsibilities of the Citizens in the Health Care* establishes the right to access the highest attainable health standards, as well as related rights to privacy and information in the context of health care.

¹⁶² Law No. 02/L-76 on Reproductive Health.

expenditures (40% of medical costs) limits access for vulnerable groups; around one fifth of the population has very limited access to health care. Health financing is not based on needs assessments, institutional accountability has not increased, and no progress has been made on a health strategy.¹⁶³ In 2021, primary health-care providers in Pristina began providing e-health services. The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo (OIK) is making progress ensuring **access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)**, strengthening compliance with the Constitution and improving indicator results.¹⁶⁴ A 2021 OIK inquiry, including seven focus group discussions with women of reproductive age (15–49 years), found concerns with confidentiality, lack of privacy and respect, and poor-quality health services. The inquiry will continue and a report with recommendations is expected in 2022. Limited community engagement in development of SRHR-related policies leads to policies and services that fail to reach or respond to actual needs. Most SRHR policies have expired. In 2022, a Mother, Child and Reproductive health strategy will be developed. Despite Kosovo’s progress in responding to HIV/AIDS, it is an area that still requires attention. **People living with HIV/AIDS** face challenges in testing and access to prevention, treatment and health care, in relation to economic barriers,

prejudices and stereotypes, gender inequality and stigma and discrimination in health institutions.¹⁶⁵

72. The Kosovo Constitution (Article 156) provides **legal grounds and guarantees for the protection of refugees and IDPs**.¹⁶⁶ Return necessitates guarantee of conditions conducive to return (public services, income-generating opportunities, access to property rights and secure tenure, adequate housing and infrastructure, security and freedom of movement, and inter-ethnic relations).¹⁶⁷ K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian returnees often face discrimination in obtaining personal documentation, which obstructs their access to housing services, as highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing after her 2015 mission to Serbia and Kosovo.¹⁶⁸ Kosovo is developing a fully effective, **protection-sensitive entry system for mixed migration flows**. In 2021, Kosovo adopted a Contingency Plan for a potential influx of refugees and migrants. Registration of people on the move remains a challenge and security concern due to lack of biometric equipment, reliable data and capacities to identify, profile and refer migrants and asylum seekers or refugees, including the most vulnerable (unaccompanied children, victims of trafficking or other forms of violence). In late 2021, Kosovo adopted [Guidelines on Best Interests Procedure for Asylum](#)

¹⁶³ See: EC 2021, [Kosovo Report 2021](#).

¹⁶⁴ Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo. Ex officio report no. 894/2016: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Kosovo. December 2016.

¹⁶⁵ See: [Ombudsperson Annual Report 2019, 2020](#).

¹⁶⁶ “[The Republic of Kosovo shall promote and facilitate the safe and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons and assist them in recovering their property and possession](#)”.

¹⁶⁷ See: UNHCR “[Displaced Persons from Kosovo in the Region – A Re-assessment of Interest to Return](#)”.

¹⁶⁸ OHCHR C. 2016. Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context on her mission to Serbia and Kosovo, p. 18.

[Seeking, Refugee and Migrant Children](#), with support from the United Nations. GRETA recommended improving capacities to identify trafficking victims among people on the move.¹⁶⁹ The Criminal Code of Kosovo punishes **human trafficking** and the government is improving efforts to hold perpetrators accountable and protect victims,¹⁷⁰ but few perpetrators are prosecuted and convicted. Kosovo lacks effective victim identification procedures and a robust system to provide shelter, reintegration services, and physiological and medical care. Most services provided to victims depend on NGOs reliant on external funding. Labour emigration has revealed large-scale trafficking for labour exploitation, a risk that is not well-known by

Vulnerability to Shocks

74. The capacity of Kosovo institutions and communities to respond to **natural and human-induced disasters** is limited due, in part, to a lack of: infrastructure and equipment; access to information and education; and resources. Drought or localised floods, earthquakes and forest fires are key natural emergencies defined by the Ministry of Interior and the Agency for Management of Emergencies. Although there have been few recent natural emergencies, the limited capacity to respond to shocks increases vulnerabilities, particularly among the most excluded groups in remote areas. Socioeconomic vulnerability is likely to render Kosovo more susceptible to the impacts of **climate**

the public (due to misconceptions of trafficking as solely sexual trafficking). Funding is needed to reduce trafficking and build capacities of institutions and communities to identify victims. Better data will allow targeted, effective prevention and prosecution measures.

73. The COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated **organized crime** in Kosovo. With the attention of law enforcement agencies diverted elsewhere, criminal groups may have sought to scale up their activities. Chronically weak capacity in the rule of law to tackle organized crime¹⁷¹ coupled with weak inter-institutional coordination likely amplify these challenges and require strict measures to overcome.

change. The poor are disproportionately disadvantaged due to decreased capacity to alter habits or depart from unsafe or unhealthy areas. Thus, marginalised ethnic communities and women with less financial means (e.g. single mothers) are at higher risk. Communities in substandard housing are among the most affected by environmental impacts and disasters.¹⁷² Climate change and urbanisation are major factors of exposure and vulnerability. Evidence-based land-use planning, local risk assessments and risk-informed decisions and investments in urban areas are vital. The ability of the **social protection system** to respond rapidly to shock is undermined by a lack of unemployment insurance, rigid and

¹⁶⁹ [Second report on the compliance of Kosovo*](#) with the standards of the CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

¹⁷⁰ US Department of State, [Trafficking in Persons Report](#), June 2019.

¹⁷¹ UNODC Research on Measuring Organized Crime in the Western Balkan 2020.

¹⁷² UN-Habitat Kosovo Office, Feasibility Study for the Adequate Social Housing Programme for Kosovo, 2021. Report in process.

narrow targeting criteria for social assistance, and absence of registry of potential beneficiaries, as evidenced by shortcomings in the provision of assistance during the pandemic.

75. Although Kosovo has not experienced violent conflict or open disturbances since 2004, the **legacy of the 1998–1999 conflict** remains a vulnerability factor threatening stability in Kosovo and the region, hindering individual resilience and community conciliation and prolonging displacement within and outside Kosovo. Regional efforts and commitments have been made to support displaced persons from and in Kosovo. Since 2000, there have been 29,065 **voluntary returns from displacement** in Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and in Kosovo. Voluntary non-majority returns have decreased. In 2021, only 68 displaced families returned, one of the lowest numbers recorded since 2000.¹⁷³ Estimates indicate that 15,683 individuals remain displaced in Kosovo, in addition to 69,627 persons across the Western Balkans. Around 4,847 displaced persons showed an



Areas of **communality between communities** provide **entry points for social cohesion**:

- security and prosperity
- improved service delivery
- economic opportunities
- people engagement.

interest in voluntarily returning to/within Kosovo, most from Serbia.¹⁷⁴ The information is outdated and requires an institutional approach in compiling evidence-based data for durable solutions. The government is establishing a data collection and case management system for displaced populations and returnees. Returns and local integration mostly occur to larger mono-ethnic areas. Efforts to upgrade the normative framework exist, with Regulation (GRK) – no. 02/2018 on the Return of Displaced Persons and Durable Solutions, the inter-institutional initiative for displaced persons from Kosovo (the “Skopje Process”¹⁷⁵), and a **Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members 2022–2026**. A Concept Note on durable solutions for IDPs and returnees was drafted and endorsed by representatives from Pristina, Belgrade, Skopje and Podgorica, but implementation is delayed. Challenges remain for returnees who face ongoing vulnerabilities, particularly in effective property restitution, limited socioeconomic opportunities and opposition to return to specific locations. Returnees without land property, mainly from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, remain the most vulnerable. Re-occupying released properties remains a key challenge for the Serb returnee community,¹⁷⁶ as evidenced by the above-mentioned case of a K-Serb woman seeking return in 2021.

76. Those remaining in displacement in Kosovo face similar challenges. Based on a 2017

¹⁷³ UNHCR Kosovo- STATISTICAL OVERVIEW, December 2021.

¹⁷⁴ UNHCR Statistical Overview 2021.

¹⁷⁵ See: [Inter-institutional initiative for sustainable solution for the displaced persons from Kosovo “Skopje process,”](#) March 2019.

¹⁷⁶ [Sustainability and Reintegration Challenges Report 2021 \(Advancing Together\)](#).

profiling study of 1,327 families, the average unemployment rate among IDPs is 47% (versus 25.9% Kosovo-wide in 2020), and 29% of IDP households rely on social benefits as a primary source of income. The survey revealed few individuals with a secondary school diploma and high illiteracy as well as no formal education among the K-Roma, K-Ashkali, K-Egyptian IDPs. Lack of documentation to prove status, residence or legal tenure and lack of land allocation by municipalities causes IDPs to reside in collective centres, informal settlements or makeshift shelters, not owning or renting accommodation, living in inadequate dwellings without access to water and sewage systems, electricity, waste collection, heating systems, public transport and roads.¹⁷⁷ Solutions to displacement that strengthen resilience and limit vulnerability require a holistic, participatory process, to fully account for the intentions and needs of the displaced and host communities.

77. The **radicalisation** of residents has the potential to threaten stability and increase vulnerability to shock. Some residents have become radicalised and affiliated with ISIL (Da'esh), even travelling to the Syrian Arab Republic to join terrorist groups.¹⁷⁸ Ineffective or perfunctory radicalisation programmes can increase the threat from repatriated individuals, even those serving

sentences, and hinder community cohesion. Following her 2018 mission to Kosovo, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights called for fundamentalism and extremism, including ultranationalism, to be combated and for action in line with international standards to protect the cultural rights of all from such ideologies.¹⁷⁹

78. **Polarisation within Kosovo and mistrust among ethnic groups**, fuelled by conflict and ethno-nationalist narratives in public discourse, need to be taken seriously when assessing vulnerability. A 2019 **social cohesion analysis**¹⁸⁰ by UNDP yielded three themes: quality of political leadership; stagnation in economy, governance and social services; and possibilities to unite for change. It identified areas of commonality between communities: security and prosperity with long-term investments in governance and rule of law; improved service delivery; economic opportunities; and people engagement. Survey respondents said they would not be happy to share an apartment building with, or to have more friends from, other ethnic communities, implying disinterest in interaction with other communities. Measures are needed to connect individuals from different groups and create opportunities to foster cohesion.

Socioeconomic Situation

¹⁷⁷ UNHRC. 2016. Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context on her mission to Serbia and Kosovo, p. 18.

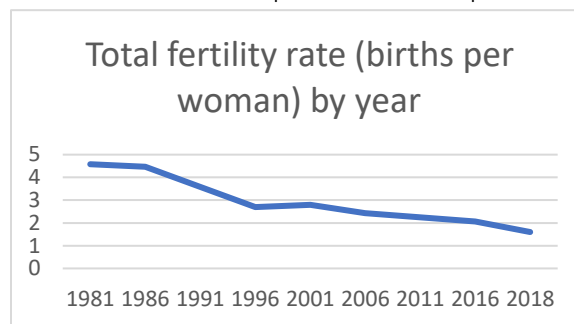
¹⁷⁸ European Union Institute for Security Studies. [Islamic radicalism in the Balkans](#). June 2016.

¹⁷⁹ OHCHR: Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights on her mission to Serbia and Kosovo, A/HRC/37/55/Add.1, 19 January 2018.

¹⁸⁰ UNDP and Folke Bernadotte Academy, Social Cohesion in Kosovo: Context review and entry-points, 2019

79. People in situations of deprivation are at risk of being left behind across multiple dimensions of well-being. Poverty is linked to deprivation in health, development and education. Although **poverty** is associated with violations of economic, social, and cultural rights, it can also increase risk of violations of civil and political rights (to life, property, and non-discrimination in access to public services and civil documentation).
80. Kosovo's economic growth in the past decade has not coincided with robust job creation in the private sector, making it difficult for many to earn a decent living. **Unemployment is 25.9%**, with higher rates among certain groups (women, youth, certain non-majority groups).¹⁸¹ In 2021, around 21% of the population lived **below** the upper middle-income poverty rate defined by the World Bank (\$5.5 in 2011 PPP), a rate forecast to fall to 17% in 2023.¹⁸² Rural inhabitants and female-led households are disproportionately affected.¹⁸³ Children experience higher rates (23%), especially households with three or more children, which experience both high rates of poverty (26.3%) and extreme poverty (8%).¹⁸⁴ Children in poorer households are *less* likely to reach their first and fifth birthdays compared to rich households.¹⁸⁵ Rural populations (especially in remote areas) have higher illiteracy (twice the rate in urban areas, especially among women), fewer economic opportunities, and limited access to the Internet, public

utilities and public transport.



81. The budget for overall **social protection** (pensions, veteran benefits, social assistance, etc.) has steadily increased in recent years (from EUR 453 million in 2019 to EUR 574.8 million in 2022¹⁸⁶), although the proportion of the overall budget decreased (23% in 2019 to 21% in 2022). Old-age pensions and conflict-related benefits dominate. Social services, decentralised at the municipal level, face a lack of sustainable funding, low quality services and lack of links to other sectors.¹⁸⁷ The only poverty-targeted programme, the SAS, was designed to build human capital of the poor but constituted just 0.45% of GDP in 2019.¹⁸⁸ The monthly compensation is insufficient, and the potential of SAS to protect the poor has steadily declined due to: inadequate, outdated eligibility criteria; low and declining benefits (larger households penalised, lack of automatic price indexation eroding value over time); limited coverage (10% of all households, 35% of households in the poorest quintile); and lack of coordination between the SAS, social services and employment services.

¹⁸¹ KAS, 2021. [Labour Force Survey in Kosovo](#), 2020.

¹⁸² World Bank Group, '[Macro Poverty Outlook for Europe and Central Asia](#)', p. 61.

¹⁸³ KAS and World Bank Group, [Consumption Poverty in Kosovo](#), May 2019.

¹⁸⁴ UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Kosovo, 2019.

¹⁸⁵ KAS & UNICEF, 2020: [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey \(MICS\)](#). 17 of 1,000 children in poor households and 11 in rich households.

¹⁸⁶ Kosovo [budget](#) 2022.

¹⁸⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Strategic Plan 2018–2022, Pristina, 2017.

¹⁸⁸ World Bank. 2017. Closing the Gap: The State of Social Safety Nets 2017.

Kosovo is seeking to reform the SAS to eliminate discrimination in programme design, foster inclusion and reduce poverty.¹⁸⁹ Reforms must account for population projections (decreasing fertility, ageing population)¹⁹⁰ and demographic imbalances due to migration, as these would vastly increase overall dependency resulting in further pressure to increase the social protection budget. For 2022, the government set clear social protection indicators, to reduce: poverty from 17.6% in 2015 to 13%; youth unemployment from 52.7% in 2015 to 30%; and youth NEET from 27.4% in 2015 to 25%.¹⁹¹

82. The estimated Kosovo Gini coefficient was 29 for Kosovo in 2020,¹⁹² a slight increase in **inequality** since 2012.¹⁹³ Certain groups (i.e. children and youth, certain categories of women, older persons) are at greater risk of poverty than others. Single mothers, single older women, disabled persons from minority communities and LGBTQI+ persons in rural communities are more likely to have persistently low incomes and greater vulnerability to shocks. The UNICEF 2019 situation analysis cited persistent **gender discrimination** as a key challenge for Kosovo, hindering women's access to economic, political and social opportunities. Gender

bias reduces Kosovo's capacity to reach its development goals. SGBV is prevalent: 19% of women report physical or sexual abuse and 29% sexual harassment.¹⁹⁴ In 2020, 79% of women 15–64 years old were inactive in the labour force versus 44% of men.¹⁹⁵ Overall labour force participation is 38% for people 15–64 years old; overall employment is 28%. This means 62% of working age people (79% of women) are inactive;¹⁹⁶ 43% of males versus 14% of females are employed, the **highest gender disparity in employment** in the region and a significant development challenge for Kosovo due to untapped potential for economic growth. Policies have not generated change in gender roles or improved women's status. Increasing employment, specifically women's participation in the labour market, has become a public policy priority for Kosovo. Kosovo should reform maternity and parental leave, particularly in the private sector. Limited access to childcare, elderly care facilities and flexible work arrangements are also barriers to women's employment, as formal options for care beyond maternity leave are limited, and family-friendly schedules are often unavailable.¹⁹⁷ Including the provisions of

¹⁸⁹ The World Bank, [Kosovo Social Assistance Scheme Study](#) 2019.

¹⁹⁰ KAS, 2017. [Kosovo Population Projection 2017–2061](#). According to the median variant of population projections, the population could decrease to 1,492,192 by 2061, if the total fertility rate (TFR) decreases to 1.5 children/woman by 2031 and remains at that level in 2031–2061. The gender ratio (GRB) is assumed to be 110.5 boys/100 girls and net migration -10,000 in 2011–2061. The population is projected to increase until 2031 and decline thereafter. If the TFR falls more and stabilises at 1.1 child/woman from 2031 onwards, and constant net migration of -20,000, the total population will decrease sharply to 688.847 (by 60.4%) by 2061.

¹⁹¹ Kosovo [budget law](#) 2022.

¹⁹² **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** World Bank Group, [Macro Poverty Outlook for Europe and Central Asia](#), p. 61.

¹⁹³ From 26.2 in 2012 to 25.5 in 2017 (KAS & World Bank Group, [Consumption Poverty in Kosovo](#), May 2019) to 29 in 2020 (World Bank Group, [Macro Poverty Outlook for Europe and Central Asia](#), p. 61).

¹⁹⁴ OSCE led Survey on Violence against Women: Wellbeing and Safety of Women, Brussels, March 2019.

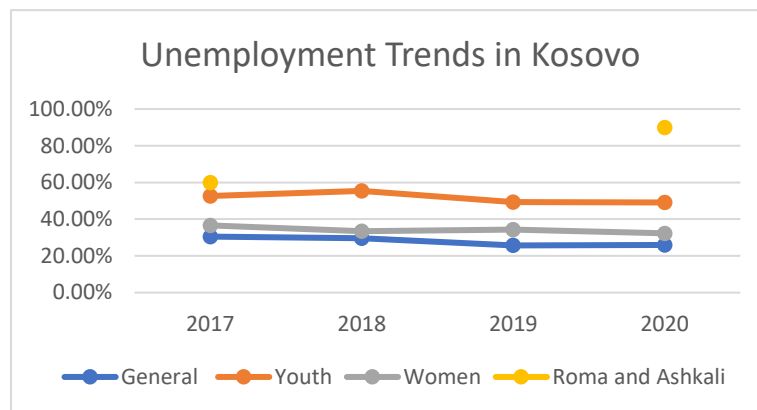
¹⁹⁵ KAS, 2021. [Kosovo Labour Force Survey, 2020](#). Pristina: KAS.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ EC, 2021 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy: Kosovo 2021 Report, Strasbourg, October 2021.

the EU Work-Life Balance Directive in the legal framework would improve opportunities for women and men to balance their home and work lives, and help address women's underrepresentation in the labour market.¹⁹⁸ The process must involve men and women, with clear leadership from the top, including sufficient resources.

83. Similar prioritisation is needed in health. Kosovo is increasing access to SRHR,¹⁹⁹ but women's enjoyment of the **right to health**,



notably **SRHR**, remains hampered by limited budget allocation and uneven access.

Who Is Left Behind and Why?

85. Various groups face hardships reflected by discrimination, isolation, varied access to services and/or poverty. At the intersection of factors related to discrimination,

84. In the absence of strong social protection schemes, **remittances from Kosovo's diaspora** are vital. In 2019, Kosovo received EUR 852 million (~15.8% of Kosovo's GDP).²⁰⁰ The prediction that the pandemic would adversely impact remittances proved inaccurate; remittances increased in 2020 and 2021.²⁰¹ This was in line with past crises, where remittances in Kosovo proved resilient and reflects the demand-driven nature of remittances in Kosovo and the spillover of stimuli in diaspora host countries.²⁰² A former lack of effective

policy for diaspora engagement was addressed in July 2021 by the issuance of Kosovo's first **Diaspora Bonds** with three- and five-year maturities amounting to EUR 20 million.²⁰³ Effective **migration governance** is vital to maximise the potential of migration and achieve sustainable development outcomes. The 2030 Agenda calls for implementation of planned, well-managed migration policies (SDG 10, target 10.7), a comprehensive approach to migration and enhanced partnership and international cooperation.

geography, vulnerability to shocks, governance and socioeconomic status analysed above, certain groups face multiple, reinforcing sources of deprivation

¹⁹⁸ Kosovo Women's Network. [Expanding Choices through Family-Friendly Policies: Kosovo Analytical Report](#), 2021.

¹⁹⁹ Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo. Ex officio report no. 894/2016: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Kosovo. December 2016.

²⁰⁰ Remittances accounted for about 15.8% of Kosovo's annual GDP in 2019: World Bank. Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) – Kosovo. [World Bank staff estimates](#). In 2019, Kosovo received EUR 852 million in remittances (Kosovo Central Bank. [Kosovo Economy at a Glance](#). 2019.)

According to KAS Living Standard Statistics 2017, remittances comprised 8% of sources of individual income in 2017. (KAS. [Kosovo in Figures 2018](#), p. 50.)

²⁰¹ Central Bank of Kosovo, 'Balance of Payments Time Series' available for [remittances](#) and [services](#).

²⁰² Around 60% of the remittances and other inflows of the diaspora come from Germany and Switzerland.

²⁰³ [Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers announcement on Diaspora Bonds](#), 21 July 2021.

and inequalities, rendering them more likely to be left behind.

86. **Specific categories of women and girls** (particularly women from non-majority communities, SGBV victims, older women, migrant women and women with disabilities) are at risk of being left behind the furthest. Their status is underpinned by negative social norms based on patriarchy, limited political representation, lower participation in education, early marriage, high unemployment and higher exposure to SGBV. The economic impact of the pandemic on the well-being of women, particularly single mothers, unemployed women and women from non-majority communities, has been significant, although measures directed at women in the fiscal recovery package mitigated some adverse effects. Ownership of property by women has increased, but women continue to face discrimination in the labour market and when accessing finance. Women are still **underrepresented in leadership positions**, both in private and public institutions.
87. These challenges are even greater for **women and girls from non-majority communities**, including displaced and returnee women, and intersect across economic and social dimensions. Although little disaggregated data is available, there are trends. Child and early marriage impact women and girls from K-Roma, K-Ashkali, K-Egyptian and K-Gorani communities at

higher levels than others.²⁰⁴ Around 10% of K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian women aged 15–49 years were first married or entered a marital union before 15 years of age; uneducated women are most affected.²⁰⁵ Child mortality is almost two times higher in K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities.²⁰⁶ K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian women have among the lowest levels of education in Kosovo, due to: lack of teachers and textbooks in their language; discrimination in schools; security concerns; limited financial resources; household obligations;²⁰⁷ and lack of registration in the civil registry, hindering access to public services. Education abandonment further isolates girls. In 2019, the OIK found K-Roma women less likely to be employed than K-Roma men.²⁰⁸ A 2018 profiling exercise found a 92% unemployment rate reported by K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian female IDPs.²⁰⁹

88. Despite a quota for participation in the Assembly, the small number of seats held by minorities means underrepresentation of minority women. K-Roma, K-Ashkali, K-Egyptian and K-Gorani communities have been exclusively represented by men in the current and previous Assembly; the K-Bosniak and K-Serb communities are represented by two and three female members of parliament respectively. K-Bosnian, K-Turkish and K-Gorani women are also underrepresented in municipal

²⁰⁴ UNFPA, Factsheet [Kosovo\(UNSC 1244\) Child Marriage](#) and Kosovo Constraints Analysis, Millennium Challenge Kosovo, Pristina: 2016.

²⁰⁵ KAS & UNICEF 2020 [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#).

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Färnsveden U., Qosaj-Mustafa A., Farnsworth, N., 2014. [Gender Profile: An Analysis of Gender Differences at All Levels in Kosovo](#).

²⁰⁸ Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo, [Annual Report 2018](#), Pristina, March 2019. In Kamenicë/Kamenica, there are only six women local principals and, as of March 2020, no K-Roma women working in any factories in Kosovo.

²⁰⁹ UNHCR 2018. Profiling of Internally Displaced Persons in Kosovo: Assessing the route to durable solutions for IDPs in Kosovo, January 2018, pp. 34, 48.

assemblies.²¹⁰ Notably, the third Deputy Prime Minister for Minority Issues and Human Rights is a woman from the K-Bosniak community.

89. K-Serb women from northern Kosovo face challenges with the **integrated judiciary system** envisaged by the Brussels Agreement. Enforcement of final decisions by courts under the Government of Serbia pre-operationalisation of the system in November 2017 is often hindered by the Kosovo judiciary's reluctance to enforce the rulings. Thus, many K-Serb women cannot legally divorce, affecting their claims to property, child custody and spousal support.
90. Conflicting competencies of other institutions (education, health, social welfare) sponsored by the Government of Serbia, also affect K-Serb survivors of **SGBV, including domestic** violence, the vast majority of whom are women. The persistent lack of trust in integrated law enforcement among K-Serbs leads to acute underreporting of SGBV. According to a recent study by the Kosovo Women's Network, access to justice, including in SGBV cases, is undermined by problematic communication and a lack of access to Serbian-speaking prosecutors in northern Kosovo. Kosovo police statistics show 2,456 cases of domestic violence reported in 2021, with the number likely higher due to underreporting. Many victims, especially women from non-majority communities,

are unable to access public services for survivors due to barriers (language, transport issues). The pandemic and lockdown increased the risk of SGBV, especially for vulnerable groups, women and girls, due to heightened tensions at home and few opportunities to seek help.²¹¹ In 2021, there were three cases of femicide. Shelter managers reported an increase in victims seeking assistance coinciding with less ability to provide social support or psychosocial counselling.²¹² Municipal initiative is needed to better track and report SGBV, improve stakeholder coordination, and ensure sustainable funding.

91. Using the multidimensional threshold, one of four **children** in Kosovo is deprived in at least two dimensions²¹³ due to: poor quality and accessibility to public services, leading to a poor start in life; lack of visibility and prioritisation of child rights in the government agenda; child abuse, neglect and exploitation.²¹⁴ Poverty underlies a high rate of school dropouts and **child labour** (including hazardous and exploitive). The 2020 MICS in Kosovo found 5.3% of children aged 5–17 years involved in child labour, mostly children from rural areas (6.8%) and children with no education (10%).²¹⁵ Marginalised K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities are vulnerable to forced begging and sex trafficking; child labour is 17% in these communities. Children in Pristina cite poverty and

²¹⁰ Kosovo Women's Network, [Kosovo Gender Analysis 2018](#).

²¹¹ UN Policy Brief, [The Impact of COVID-19 on Women](#), 9 April 2020. [Gender-based violence and COVID-19](#), UNDP Brief, May 2020.

²¹² UN Women, Rapid regional assessment on impact of COVID on specialised services for cases of domestic violence, May 2020, Kosovo recommendations.

²¹³ UNICEF, Wellbeing of Children in Kosovo: Multidimensional Overlapping Poverty Analysis (MODA), 2014.

²¹⁴ UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Kosovo, 2019.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

economic hardship as pushing them to the street.²¹⁶ Most children in the streets do not attend school at all (74%); others only attend occasionally (26%).²¹⁷ Despite the normative framework prohibiting all forms of forced or compulsory labour, government resources are insufficient to support compliance, identify and protect victims, and investigate claims.²¹⁸ There are few investigations, prosecutions and convictions of forced labour due to inadequate resources, per Labour Inspectorate. In 2019, the Assembly adopted the **Law on Child Protection**, to ensure a well-coordinated government system to improve prevention of, and response to, all forms of violence and exploitation against children. The Labour Inspectorate and Centres for Social Welfare face financial and human resource constraints. Shelters lack funding to accommodate and treat victims.²¹⁹

92. Primary school enrolment is comparable for children from urban and rural areas; differences become apparent at the secondary level, as fewer children from rural areas complete lower secondary education and transition to upper secondary education. Inclusion of K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian children and youth in Kosovo's education system remains challenging. Due to COVID-19, schools in Kosovo were closed March–September 2020; distance learning was facilitated via shkollat.org, an e-learning platform. A UNKT rapid assessment showed most children were able to attend remotely; 4% missed

lessons due to a lack of equipment or weak Internet connections, adversely impacting their right to education. A May 2020 report from the Pedagogic Institute of Kosovo (PIK) found the educational system was not prepared for e-teaching modalities, private media outlets designed an online educational programme, and marginalised groups were not consistently reached. Support is needed to ensure quality e-education and innovative teaching methods. Girls from non-majority communities and those living in poverty had low school attendance pre-pandemic, rates that were likely exacerbated by the pandemic, and girls took on additional household and care work burdens. These factors necessitate targeted support to prevent school dropouts and support children in need. A focus on digital literacy, particularly for girls from marginalised groups, is needed for schools to become advanced technological centres and to ensure inclusive education.

93. Kosovo has a comprehensive strategy for the integration of non-majority communities (K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian). As elicited by focus group discussions, however, marginalisation and exclusion remain exceptionally high. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which visited Serbia and Kosovo in 2014, recommended the development of educational materials that promote pluralism and teach history objectively to combat ethnic polarisation and discrimination. The Special Rapporteur

²¹⁶ GIZ, [Research Report: Children in street situation, Pristina Municipality](#), November 2016.

²¹⁷ Of 72 interviewed by GIZ, 35 had dropped out of school, 18 had never been registered, and 19 went to school occasionally.

²¹⁸ See: Section 7c of the Kosovo Human Rights report, 2018.

²¹⁹ US Department of Labor Report, 2018.

on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, recommended policies guaranteeing the right to adequate housing without discrimination on any grounds.²²⁰ Since 2019, Kosovo has been a signatory of the Declaration of Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process,²²¹ which foresees the commitment of authorities to improve efforts for full equality and the integration of Roma communities. The declaration focuses on employment, housing, education, health, civil registration and non-discrimination. The drafting of the new strategy 2022–2026 was initiated in 2021.

94. K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities face **disproportionally high rates of mortality and malnutrition, low access to education and employment, and violence**, as a result of compromising health-seeking behaviour, more early marriage and child labour linked to poverty and discrimination. K-Roma, K-Ashkali, and K-Egyptian communities face exclusion in access to rights and services due to the number of *unregistered persons*. Despite efforts to facilitate late birth registration, the challenge persists, hindering their access to rights and services.²²² An institutional approach is needed to establish systemic mechanisms to identify, prevent, reduce and protect unregistered persons and decrease the risk of statelessness. In

2020, this issue was addressed by the OIK. One opinion and one ex-officio report were produced and directed to basic courts²²³ and municipalities²²⁴, in which the identified unregistered persons sought to initiate an administrative procedure and/or right to an effective legal remedy.

95. Kosovo's Constitution of June 2008 recognises the **right to education of non-majority communities**. The **Law on Education** foresees equal educational opportunities for schoolchildren, regardless of mother tongue, and envisages the right of students from non-majority communities to be taught in their native languages through secondary school. Still, challenges remain in the provision of curricula, textbooks and other school materials to non-Albanian speaking students. Separate educational systems perpetuate divisions between communities and need to be addressed. Smaller communities face challenges in accessing community-oriented educational subjects and preserving their identity and culture. The Kosovo government lacks the human capacities to provide curricula in Serbian or in Roma; thus, most K-Serb, K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities attend schools sponsored by the Serbian Government. No K-Serbs attend schools in the institutions of the Kosovo government, and no K-Albanians attend schools that use the curriculum sponsored by the Government of Serbia. The absence of an education system for the K-Roma, K-

²²⁰ Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context on her mission to Serbia and Kosovo*, A/HRC/31/54/Add.2.

²²¹ [Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process](#).

²²² UNHCR, *Profiling of Internally Displaced Persons in Kosovo: Assessing the route to durable solutions for IDPs in Kosovo*, January 2018.

²²³ [Ombudsperson's legal opinion in the capacity of friend of the Court \(amicus curiae\)](#).

²²⁴ [Report with recommendations Ex-officio No. 148/2020 with regard to legal identity of unregistered persons](#).

Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities results in a language barrier, furthering discrimination and exclusion. A recent review of Kosovo's schoolbooks found almost no mention of the history or traditions of non-majority communities.²²⁵

96. People on the move in Kosovo, including refugees, IDPs and migrants in irregular situations, and victims of trafficking, have been particularly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic presents itself as three crises: a **health crisis** as people on the move may lack the tools to protect themselves against the virus; a **socioeconomic crisis** with risks to already precarious livelihoods; and a **protection crisis** due to stigma and human rights infringements. Authorities included asylum seekers and refugees in the Kosovo deployment and vaccination plan alongside residents. In 2021, a UNHCR needs assessment found the pandemic greatly impacted their livelihood and socioeconomic conditions for all persons of concern. A January 2020 study found that the majority of the K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities live in settlements, which are sometimes informal and have poor infrastructure.²²⁶ Most K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian returnees without land or property find it difficult to be included in house reconstruction projects. Another study found that marginalised Roma were more likely to live in overcrowded dwellings and less likely to have access to tap water, electricity and public sewerage non-Roma,²²⁷ hindering

their abilities to respect distancing and hygiene practices. These communities need targeted support to improve sanitation, awareness-raising and financial assistance,²²⁸ and to counter the potential for smuggling of migrants and trafficking.

97. **Civil society organizations (CSOs)**, particularly **women's organizations**, play a vital role in raising the perspectives of minority and marginalised groups of women and incorporating them into policy.
98. **People with disabilities**, particularly children and youth, often face stigma and discrimination and are largely excluded from public life, **with limited access to educational and health services, public spaces, and employment opportunities**. Social protection services are of poor quality and not adapted to their needs. The **Law on Vocational Ability, Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities** obliges companies to employ one person with disabilities for every 50 employees or pay a monthly fee. In 2022, Prime Minister Kurti reinforced the law by issuing a decision obliging public bodies to increase the employment quota for people with disabilities, rendering the Labour Inspectorate responsible for monitoring compliance. Access to health for people with disabilities is limited as health professionals are inadequately trained. Most **children with disabilities** have limited access to education (due to lack of disability-friendly infrastructure such as trained assistants), health care and rehabilitation

²²⁵ Terre des Hommes and Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo, "Diversity and social inclusion analyses of schoolbooks in Kosovo," 2021.

²²⁶ OSCE, Overview of Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian Communities in Kosovo, January 2020.

²²⁷ UNDP and World Bank, [Regional Roma Survey 2017 – Kosovo Face Sheet](#), April 2018.

²²⁸ BIRN, [ROMA: Europe's Neglected Coronavirus Victims](#), 1 April 2020.

services, public facilities and services. Limited policy and legislation focus on inclusive education and early childhood development resulting in limited infrastructural accessibility, transportation and specialised staff.²²⁹ NGOs implement school health programmes, parent education and local interventions, which is neither sustainable nor systematic. Resource Centres support disabled children; yet an estimated 96% of deaf students are functionally illiterate. People with disabilities are vulnerable to shocks. Adapted, targeted policies, awareness and adapted early warning systems are needed to reduce vulnerability. A declaration by the government of 2022 as the [year of persons with disabilities](#) provides advocacy opportunities.

99. **With an ageing population** (9% over 65 years old, expected to rise to 22% by 2050), plans must include services to support the well-being and rights of older people. Alongside decreasing fertility (2.42 children per woman in 2011 to 1.66 children in 2019), extended life expectancy (72.5 years) and negative net migration (-1.44/1000 population/year), planning must reflect the needs of the **shifting demographics**.
100. The Constitution and legal framework prohibit direct or indirect discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, health care, and education, and address legal gaps in the rights of **LGBTQI+ persons**. Still, criminal assaults against LGBTQI+ people are rarely investigated and prosecuted. Yet, when the motivation for a crime is based on gender,

sexual orientation, or perceived affinity of the victim to persons targeted by such hostility, the law considers motivation an aggravating circumstance. Government officials reiterate support for the human rights of the LGBTQI+ community by sponsoring and attending numerous related public events, although the Prime Minister did not attend the 2021 Pride Parade. While the Constitution recognises everyone's right to marry, **family law** restricts marriage to a union of two spouses of different sexes, prompting Human Rights Watch to conclude that "[u]ncertainty around the scope of civil unions puts same-sex couples and their families in Kosovo at risk".²³⁰ In 2022, a **draft civil code** – which would have facilitated the potential recognition of same-sex civil unions – was rejected by Parliament. In consultations with the UNKT, LGBTQI+ persons noted frequent discriminatory language in academia, media and politics, including public speeches, as well as increasing hate speech in the public debate on the civil code amendment, which was met with little to no reaction by public figures. Limited understanding of what counts as discrimination is a challenge. All participants stressed the need to raise public awareness. Since the onset of COVID-19, increased demand for services and shelters has been reported, as many community members found themselves at odds with their own families.

101. The **pandemic** is impacting more than the health sector, with effects likely to be felt for years. In 2020, the United Nations received reports of non-majority community members being **denied access** to health

²²⁹ UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Kosovo*, 2019.

²³⁰ Human Rights Watch, [Joint Letter to Authorities in Kosovo regarding the Freedom to Marry](#), 16 March 2022.

facilities on the basis of ethnicity and perceived heightened exposure. With social and economic safety nets stretched, the **pandemic deepened pre-existing inequalities**. People in vulnerable situations are most likely to suffer, hindering achievement of development goals and economic and social rights. To understand the impact on households and businesses, the UNKT undertook three rapid assessments (April 2020–March 2021) on the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic and the effectiveness of the response. The results²³¹ show:

- 11% of respondents reported job loss, mostly in construction (30%) and retail/trade (14%).
- 12% who lost jobs reported receiving unemployment benefits, compared to 3% and 8% in assessments 1 and 2.
- 30% of households and 82% of businesses had decreased monthly income or revenue since the pandemic started. This compares with Assessment 1 (49% households; 63% businesses), which suggests that businesses were increasingly affected the longer the pandemic continued while households re-secured their incomes.
- 23% of respondents reported effects on their psychological, mental, or emotional health due to the pandemic.
- Women’s time spent on unpaid domestic work increased more than for men and remains higher, although lower than in waves 1 and 2 (16% of women reported increased cleaning responsibilities, versus 8% of men; 10% of women reporting increased time cooking, versus 3% of men; and 7% of women reporting increased childcare responsibilities, versus 3% of men).
- 20% still have difficulties accessing food, supplies and health services, albeit a much lower percentage than in assessment 1.
- 55% of businesses had plans for investments before the pandemic, with 76% opting not to

invest due to the situation. 12% saw new business opportunities due to COVID-19.

- 5% of children missed school due to a lack of device or weak Internet.

Impact of COVID-19 in Kosovo

- The government declared a public health emergency on 15 March 2020.
- As of 2 March 2022, there had been 221,727 recovered cases, 3,106 COVID fatalities. Infections spiked in July 2021 and January 2022, correlating with diaspora visits.
- Vaccinations began 29 March 2021. As of 9 March 2022, 1,816,525 doses had been issued; 817,708 residents were vaccinated with two doses and 98,354 with boosters or third doses, leading to a vaccination rate (two doses) of 64% for those above 18 years and 56% for those above 12 years.²³² Mobile teams supported non-majority communities and people who could not travel easily.
- The authorities acted to mitigate the adverse effects of restrictions on the economy. In April 2020, EUR 180 million was used to subsidise social assistance payments, pensions and incomes.²³³ Some of these measures were later carried over into a EUR 420 million socioeconomic recovery package announced in July 2021.²³⁴
- UN advocacy contributed to the inclusion of special measures in the package for particularly vulnerable women.
- Economic activity contracted by 5.3% in 2020, but rebounded in 2021, with an estimated recovery of over 7%.²³⁵
- COVID-19 derailed progress towards the SDGs, exacerbating pre-existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities in the health, social protection and education systems.

²³¹ If not stated otherwise, numbers are from assessment 3, implemented in March 2021.

²³² Ministry of Health via UNICEF, as of 22 March 2022. Note: These figures do not include K-Serbs who were vaccinated in Serbia.

²³³ The Emergency Fiscal Package was adopted 30 March 2020. The Operational Plan was issued 3 April 2020.

²³⁴ [Economic Recovery Package](#), June 2021.

²³⁵ World Bank, [Global Economic Prospects 2022](#), January 2022, p. 79.

102. Another United Nations-supported assessment found a decrease of 17% of employment in 36 municipalities, with gastronomy, hair salons, construction and transport sectors most impacted. Women and youth were most impacted, with average employment rates **dropping** by 17% and 18%, respectively. According to municipality officials, this percentage would be higher without labour formalisation. In late 2021, there were around 11% fewer businesses than in late 2019, with business closures evident in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, manufacturing industry, production, construction and service.²³⁶ The Central Bank of Kosovo recently assessed that household over-indebtedness increased by 2% due to COVID-19, while the World Bank assessed over 50% of Kosovo businesses expected to default soon.
103. **Nonetheless, the pandemic offered opportunities, by increasing attention to sectors with persistent structural difficulties long neglected.** Kosovo's **health sector** has long suffered challenges that

disproportionately affect those at the margins of society, through absence of health insurance, a Pristina-focused system that is less accessible to the regions, an ageing intensive care infrastructure, and inadequate protocols on hygiene, medicine and qualified staff. In the **education sector**, the trend towards digitalisation and e-learning offers opportunities to close the gaps of attainment. Children living in poverty, K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian children, and children with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by school closing. An e-learning platform increased access and interest among children of marginalised groups; it should be further explored and improved.²³⁷ Opportunities also exist to support **survivors of domestic and sexual violence** and **informal workers** and to reform the **social assistance system**. Diversification of the economy, which is currently dominated by the service sector with limited prospect for growth, unable to offset an imbalance of trade, and particularly vulnerable to shock, could help. Understanding the needs of those affected will help Kosovo build back better.

5. COMMITMENTS UNDER INTERNATIONAL NORMS AND STANDARDS

104. Although Kosovo cannot be party to international human rights treaties, its Constitution foresees the applicability of **international human rights norms** and proclaims human rights as the basis of the legal order, recognising their indivisibility, inalienability, and inviolability.²³⁸ The

Constitution also determines that the rights guaranteed by core international and regional human rights treaties are directly applicable in Kosovo, prevailing over laws and other public acts in case of conflict.²³⁹ This encompasses the: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR);

²³⁶ UN-Habitat and Ministry of Local Government Administration, n.d. Assessment on the impact of COVID-19 in Kosovo's municipalities and businesses, December 2021/January 2022. Report pending.

²³⁷ PIK Report, May 2020.

²³⁸ Constitution of Kosovo, article 21.

²³⁹ Constitution of Kosovo, article 22.

European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its Protocols; CoE FCPNM; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); Convention on the Rights of the Child; and Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Constitution does not establish the direct applicability of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), a gap partially filled as many rights established by the ICESCR are encompassed in the UDHR (rights to social security, work, adequate standard of living, education). The Constitution does not distinguish between the UDHR and other treaties, holding that the rights established by these instruments are direct applicable in Kosovo. The Constitution establishes that interpretation of human rights norms shall be consistent with precedents from the European Court of Human Rights.²⁴⁰ The United Nations facilitates interactions between the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and Kosovo authorities. Since 2015, five mandate holders of the Special Procedures have visited Kosovo and issued reports with recommendations, presented to the Human Rights Council. While a 2016 delegation of the CoE Advisory Committee on the FCPNM issued the Fourth Opinion on Kosovo, noting moderate progress achieved in several areas, measures remain needed to implement the recommendations. In 2019, the CoE adopted a resolution, making

recommendations to improve implementation of the Convention.

105. Some groups (outlined under the LNOB section) face discrimination preventing them from obtaining legal protection and access to services for the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. Human rights-based reforms in support of these groups are needed alongside targeted measures. The OIK and KAS signed a **memorandum of understanding (MoU)** in Pristina, establishing cooperation towards the **development and use of statistical information** to apprise, implement and assess Kosovo policies and programmes that impact the enjoyment, protection and fulfilment of human rights. Both institutions agreed to work together to: identify and produce relevant indicators; collect, analyse, share and publish data disaggregated by grounds of discrimination; publish reports and/or analyses; and provide advice and assistance to each other. The Working Group first met in 2021.
106. Article 223 of the Constitution guarantees **CEDAW's** direct application and prioritisation over provisions of laws and other acts. Although Kosovo cannot report regularly on CEDAW implementation or receive specific recommendations, CEDAW provisions are binding. There is little evidence of Kosovo courts using these provisions. Kosovo is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Following adoption of a constitutional amendment in 2020, the **Istanbul Convention** became directly applicable in Kosovo, resulting in a Strategy on Protection against Domestic

²⁴⁰ Constitution of Kosovo, article 53.

Violence and Violence against Women for 2022–2026 and a drafting process for a new Law on Domestic Violence.

107. Kosovo has a basic legal framework regulating **labour affairs**.²⁴¹ The **Law on Labour**, adopted in 2010, foresees protection for employees in the private and public sectors and for employees regulated through a special law when that law fails to solve disputes. In 2008, the government amended the **Law on Labour Inspectorate**, which mandates the Labour Inspectorate to oversee labour rights and occupational health and safety and, in 2013, adopted the **Law on Safety and Health at Work**. There is a need to further align the legal and policy framework on labour and employment with

the EU Acquis under the SAA between the EU and Kosovo, notably on working conditions for women and on social and anti-discrimination policies. As Kosovo cannot formally ratify ILO conventions, its efforts to promote rights at work and decent work, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues are hindered.

108. Albeit not a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) or Sendai Framework Convention, Kosovo is advancing on **climate change and DRR** and developed and adopted a **Strategy for Climate Change and Action Plan** and **Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy and Action Plan**.

6. REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

109. Over 20 years since the end of the conflicts coinciding with the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, several regional and bilateral disputes remain related to border demarcation, war crimes jurisdiction and interpretation of war history, the fate of missing persons, and ethnic minority rights. The United Nations recently identified a lack of progress on reconciliation and an underlying trust deficit within and between states as key threats to regional stability and prosperity. Under the Secretary-General's prevention platform, the United Nations pledged to enhance coordination and strengthen support to constructive dialogue, trust-building and reconciliation in the region, with partners. Kosovo's status

remains unresolved, remaining on the agenda of the Security Council.

110. While the goal of **EU accession** is the driving force behind economic transformation and stability in the region, the Western Balkans remain at a crossroads. The crisis in Ukraine has brought pressures on the Balkans region with both Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterating calls for more urgent Euro-Atlantic integration, and Serbia balancing between EU aspirations and ties with Russia. Kosovo has started a process to join the CoE, of which Russia ceased to be a member on 15 March 2022.
111. In 2020, European leaders agreed to open EU accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, but objections from Bulgaria to North Macedonia's accession

²⁴¹ Law on Labour No.03/L-212, Safety and Health at Work No.04/L-161, Foreigners No.04/L-219, Protection of Breastfeeding No.05/L-023, Organizing Trade Union in

Kosovo No.04/L-011, Strikes 03/L-200, Social Economic Council No.04/L-008, Child Protection No.06/L-084, and Labour Inspectorate No.2002/9.

block the setting of a date. The EC committed to deepen its partnership with the Western Balkans, including in the context of the EU Green Deal, opening a credible accession perspective for the region, reaffirmed in EU-Western Balkans summits. In 2020, the EC adopted the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans to spur long-term economic recovery and foster regional integration and convergence with the EU. The Plan aims to support jobs, transport, energy, green and digital transition, and sustainable growth.

112. Diplomatic initiatives have supported progress in regional cooperation: the Berlin process led by EU member states, with the accompanying EU connectivity agenda and the EU Western Balkans engagement strategy; and the summit-level Brdo-Brijuni process meetings of Western Balkans leaders, led by Croatia and Slovenia. Leaders have set up regional structures promoting regional connectivity and understanding, including: the Regional Cooperation Council (based in Sarajevo, established in 2008); and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (based in Tirana, established in 2016). Western Balkans economies are closely integrated with the EU, as their largest trade partner and largest source of incoming foreign investment and other financial flows, including remittances. The EU is the main destination for outward migration. Monetary and financial systems are strongly dependent on the Euro.
113. Kosovo's close economic relations with the EU have been boosted by the SAA between the EU and individual Western Balkans countries, which include provisions for a free trade area. Implementation includes

elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, liberalisation of trade in services and investment regimes, and harmonisation of trade and investment regulations and institutions, especially in competition policy, state aid and public procurement. The EU has promoted a network of horizontal free trade agreements between candidate countries under the Central European Free Trade Agreement. Progress in EU accession can strengthen economic ties between the Western Balkans and the EU.

114. In 2019, the leaders of Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia launched the Mini Schengen regional cooperation initiative for a single labour market and free flow of people and goods by 2023, and then renamed it "Open Balkan" in 2021 and signed: Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation on Facilitating Import, Export and Movement of Goods in the Western Balkans; Memorandum on Free Access to the Labour Market; and Agreement on Cooperation in Disaster Protection. After a slow start, in 2021, with technical support from the US, the group created an Implementation Council to coordinate steps which led to agreements signed on the free movement of people, goods, and services in December 2021. While Kosovo was invited to participate, President Osmani declined, stating that it serves the interests of Serbia and aims to delay European integration of Kosovo. Although, in 2020, Kosovo agreed to join the Mini Schengen initiative as part of the 2020 Kosovo-Serbia U.S.-sponsored agreement, Prime Minister Kurti said in 2021 that he would prefer an improved version of the CEFTA agreement. The Open Balkan initiative is perceived by some as

competition to the Common Regional Market (CRM) under the Berlin process which is supported by Germany, France, the EU and others. All Western Balkans leaders and Kosovo signed the CRM in 2020 and recommitted to its implementation at the Berlin Process summit in 2021.

115. Regional free trade and commerce initiatives may gain importance with the **Ukraine crisis**. With global wheat supplies from Ukraine and Russia essentially suspended, regional production and trade of grain and other basic commodities will be vital in 2022. Serbia produced 86% of Kosovo's wheat imports in 2021.²⁴² Early 2022 witnessed glimpses of nascent protectionism with countries, like Bulgaria, Hungary and Serbia, announcing bans of grain exports to protect domestic reserves. There were also expressions of support to free trade initiatives, with President Vučić announcing that Serbia would honour contracts "in the region" despite its export ban, and later announcing exemptions for Albania and North Macedonia.²⁴³
116. Almost all of the Western Balkans are experiencing **population decline** due to falling birth rates and increased emigration, particularly youth who are leaving due to high unemployment, corruption, and ethnic-nationalist polarisation. One third of residents of the Western Balkans is believed to be living outside the region.²⁴⁴ The World Bank notes that, in the long-term, the loss of qualified workers and the shortage of skills

may adversely affect competitiveness, growth and economic convergence. Education in the region is often segregated along ethnic lines, and there are few opportunities in school to learn languages spoken locally or regionally. According to the World Bank, 44% of the working-age population in the Western Balkans has a job, with the lowest figures found in Bosnia and Herzegovina (34%) and Kosovo (28%). **Youth unemployment** is at 37.7% in the region, and the Western Balkans have among the lowest female labour force participation rates in Europe, with Kosovo the lowest in the region.²⁴⁵ Sustained, equitable growth is needed to create jobs and stabilise the economies sustainably. Yet, while economic growth in the region was at 3.7% (2019), and contracted by 3.3% (2020), it was predicted to reach 5.9% (2021).²⁴⁶ The IMF noted that, after the major economic transformation post-conflicts, structural change stalled in the mid-2000s and remains incomplete, with high unemployment across the region. The EU's Youth Guarantee Scheme, a commitment of all Western Balkans leaders, may support youth employment and education.²⁴⁷

117. The region also faces **climate-related shocks**, straining the Balkans' agriculture and forestry sectors. The World Bank noted that the Western Balkans is emerging as one of the planet's "warming hot spots" due to climate change, with risks of more frequent heatwaves, significant increase in summer

²⁴² Source: KAS, adjusted by Ministry of Agriculture, as supplied by FAO.

²⁴³ See: President Vucic announcements in [early](#) and [mid](#) March 2022.

²⁴⁴ World Bank Group. [Western Balkans Labor Market Trends 2018](#). March 2018.

²⁴⁵ World Bank, 2021. Greening the Recovery, Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No. 20, Washington DC: World Bank Group.

²⁴⁶ World Bank, [Global Economic Prospects 2022](#), January 2022, p. 78.

²⁴⁷ [Western Balkans Declaration on ensuring sustainable labour market integration of young people](#), 8 July 2021.

temperatures, reduced rainfall, and wildfires. Given the region's predominantly rain-fed agriculture, the Western Balkans' agricultural sector is vulnerable to changing rainfall patterns and increasing temperatures. Regional economic growth relies on climate-sensitive natural resources, invoking high costs for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Without a uniform strategy to mitigate effects of climate change, those unable to implement the measures will suffer most. Despite shared environmental challenges, a common regional response is lacking. Only a small share of urban wastewater in the region is treated before discharge in rivers and the sea. The Adriatic Sea and its coastline are polluted by plastic waste and other pollutants from rivers and coastal cities. Uncontrolled dumping is prevalent, and modern waste collection, recycling and

sanitary landfills are in early stages of development. Pollution hotspots (contaminated soil and chemicals) remain a concern; several cities in the Western Balkans rank among the worst for air pollution in Europe. In 2019, the United Nations Environment Programme found air pollution responsible for up to one in five premature deaths in 19 Western Balkans cities; on average, people in Western Balkans cities lose up to 1.3 years of life due to air pollution, mainly caused by thermal power plants and household heating.²⁴⁸ Similarly, the EU's Environmental Agency found that the Western Balkans have Europe's most polluted air.²⁴⁹ In years of life lost, the most significant impacts were found in central and eastern European countries, in order of decreasing rank, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Bulgaria.

7. FINANCING LANDSCAPE AND OPPORTUNITIES

118. Like most markets, Kosovo has an advanced financial system offering financial services to public and private entities. Kosovo lacks a stock exchange or capital markets to revive the economy, reduce unemployment and stimulate economic growth and liquidity; sophisticated financial services are needed. Combined with improvements in the business climate and new financing modalities, the COVID-19 crisis could serve as a springboard for accelerated and green growth.
119. Since 2015, the government has made progress ensuring fiscal discipline and

strengthening the financial sector.²⁵⁰ The Central Bank of Kosovo (CBK) began operationalising the macroprudential policy framework. Banks remain healthy (including capital adequacy) and credit growth has increased.²⁵¹ While the economy has progressed towards a **market-based system** and maintained macroeconomic stability, it remains highly dependent on external support (**diaspora**) for financial stability. COVID-19 revealed gaps (limits on use of capital conservation buffer, countercyclical buffer) and vulnerabilities in the financial system. Due to the slowdown and a government tax deferral, the 2020 **budget**

²⁴⁸ UNEP, 2019, available at: www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/air-pollution-responsible-one-five-premature-deaths-19-western.

²⁴⁹ [EEA 2020 Air Quality Report](#).

²⁵⁰ See: World Bank data on [Net ODA received](#) and [Debt Vulnerability](#).

²⁵¹ [Ex-post Evaluation of Exceptional Financial Assistance Operation to Kosovo Final Report](#).

deficit widened, more than doubling and reaching 7.6% of GDP in 2020. In 2021, the fiscal balance became almost balanced, with buoyant revenues and sluggish public investment. By the end of 2021, tax revenues had increased by 29% year-on-year, driven by a rebound in economic activity and imports, higher inflation and formalisation. Public and publicly guaranteed debt was estimated at 22.4% of GDP at the end of 2021, like 2020. A lower-than-expected budget deficit enabled deceleration of planned domestic borrowing and cash buffers in 2021.

120. **Diaspora** inflows (remittances, tourism, compensation of seasonal migrants, real estate investment) remained positive despite the pandemic. Albeit decreasing to 31.5% in 2020, they overshot pre-pandemic levels in 2021, reaching about 43²⁵² to 38.52%²⁵³ of GDP. Tourism significantly surpassed pre-pandemic levels, making Kosovo a unique case in Europe.²⁵⁴ Tourism revenues contributed to 18.9²⁵⁵–21% of GDP. The diaspora can also promote trade, foreign direct investment (FDI) and linkages, create businesses and spur entrepreneurship, support community initiatives and pool financing through pooled instrument structures. A draft strategy (2019–2023) promoting a proactive, engaged role for the diaspora is developed but not adopted. Kosovo lacks intra-institutional coordination and the whole-of-government arrangements to

support comprehensive diaspora engagement, especially at local level.

121. The fiscal deficit has been kept well below the 2% of GDP fiscal rule ceiling, government bank balances were close to 4% of GDP in 2021,²⁵⁶ and public debt remains low. This offers an opportunity to increase public debt for socioeconomic measures in response to COVID-19. In Kosovo, expanding the investor base of government debt is critical to reduce financing risks and facilitate countercyclical fiscal policy. In terms of **trade**, the account deficit remained the same in 2021 as in 2020. As exports of goods and services and remittances recover, the deficit is projected to reach 7% of GDP, driven by a rise in imports and other debts.
122. The fiscal stimulus in the July 2021 **Economic Recovery Package** focused on: employment support (12%); production and economic recovery (26%); family support (12%); public sector support (26%); and investment in infrastructure and environment (24%).²⁵⁷ International donor assistance has traditionally accounted for ~10% of GDP. Donor contribution to GDP peaked in 2008 before the financial crisis and then decreased, vastly reducing by 2018. Since the Addis Ababa Agreement on Financing Sustainable Development, the provision and value of official development assistance has changed. With international assistance, Kosovo has privatised a majority of its state-owned enterprises (US State

²⁵² IMF, 2021. [Article IV Consultations](#), January 2022.

²⁵³ According to the World Bank, as of 29 March 2022, this figure is constituted of 18.9% for [tourism](#), 14.7% for [remittances](#), and 4.92% for [real estate](#)/FDI. See also the latest [KAS statistics on GDP 2021](#).

²⁵⁴ See: IMF, 2021. [Article IV Consultations](#), January 2022.

²⁵⁵ Based on latest [KAS nominal GDP and Central Bank data](#), accessed on 29 March 2022.

²⁵⁶ Central Bank of Kosovo, 'Balance of Payments Time Series,' for [remittances](#), for [services/tourism](#). See also [KAS on Kosovo GDP for 2021](#).

²⁵⁷ The [Economic Recovery package](#) June 2021.

Department, 2018), providing fiscal savings and improving the functioning of markets.

123. In terms of per capita power purchasing parity (PPP) GDP, **Kosovo is the poorest in Europe**, at 11,388 US Dollars in 2020.²⁵⁸ With an estimated average age of 32.29 years in 2019, a youth unemployment rate (15–24 years) of 49.1%, and 33.6% of youth NEET in 2020,²⁵⁹ encourage emigration and fuel an informal, unreported economy. With the potential workforce largely disengaged, productivity is curtailed, impacting growth, revenue and human development.
124. Inefficient, near-subsistence farming is common, the result of small plots, limited mechanisation, and a lack of technical expertise. **Agriculture** accounted for only 7.4% of GDP in 2020, with 27.8% of value added from trade, construction and real estate, while 13.4% came from manufacturing.²⁶⁰ The share of agriculture in formal employment is 14%, and the sector accounts for a large share of informal employment.²⁶¹ The potential to overhaul these markets could precipitate considerable socioeconomic gains if the right incentives are put in place and supported by measures to boost competitiveness.

Foreign Direct Investment

125. Kosovo's Euroisation has maintained overall financial stability, although Kosovo lacks some sources of last resort and liquidity streams in case of economic downturn and

decline in fiscal revenues. Financial markets still lack long-term capital flows and the lack of capital market mechanisms hamper sustainable investments and job creation. FDI is a major factor that partially compensates the current account deficit. Like remittances, FDI mostly originates from Kosovo's diaspora in the EU. FDI in Kosovo remains exceptionally low compared to other transition countries in the region. Since 2008, FDI has fluctuated 7–9% of GDP and the share of FDI in financing Kosovo's deficit has been diminishing. In 2020, FDI was EUR 341.7 million, representing an increase of 34.2% from 2009, but only about 5.1% of GDP. In Q3 2021, the value of FDIs reached EUR 165.2 million, which is still low. Investments are mainly directed to real estate and construction and financial and insurance activities,²⁶² many of which are vulnerable to the Ukraine crisis.

126. Kosovo enjoys lower labour costs compared to the region which, as a primary input to productivity, should provide a comparative advantage. However, a "lower than expected quality of the labour force" and weak institutions discourage potential investors.²⁶³ Low productivity, poor infrastructure, and a business climate perceived to be unfavourable all need to be overcome to increase greenfield and brownfield FDI.

²⁵⁸ World Bank, [GDP Per Capita \(PPP\)](#), accessed on 2 March 2022.

²⁵⁹ KAS, 2021. [Labour Force Survey in Kosovo](#), 2020.

²⁶⁰ See: p. 8, available at: <https://ask.rks.gov.net/media/6311/bpv-2008-2020.pdf>.

²⁶¹ OECD, 2021, Competitiveness in South East Europe 2021: A Policy Outlook, Competitiveness and Private Sector

Development, OECD Publishing, Paris, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/dcbc2ea9-en>.

²⁶² See: Central Bank of Kosovo, [Quarterly Assessment of the Economy, QIII 2021](#).

²⁶³ Vienna Institute for Economic Studies, "Getting Stronger After COVID-19: Nearshoring Potential in the Western Balkans," June 2021.

Domestic Incentives and Landscape: Public and Private Finance

127. **Co-funding mechanisms:** The **opportunity fund** boosts sustainable growth of the private sector by scaling up investments and enhances job creation by testing innovative ideas; the **Social Inclusion Fund** supports private sector employment creation for non-majority communities and other socially excluded groups, particularly K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian. Ideally, the **private sector** would emerge as the primary engine of economic growth, channelling investments and funding towards sustainable development and the SDGs. For growth to be sustainable and equitable and for the private sector to help achieve the SDGs, Kosovo's economic model must allow catalytic finance to play a larger role in de-risking future investments. Kosovo needs more and larger companies, vibrant SMEs and a business environment that allows them to grow and expand output, employment and exports. SMEs account for 99.9% of all companies, generate 81% of total value added and account for 76% of employment²⁶⁴ with a nominal per capita GDP of 4,347 US Dollars (2020)²⁶⁵ per capita PPP GDP of 11,388 US Dollars (2020).²⁶⁶ Of the 20,783 registered active businesses,²⁶⁷ women own around 11% predominantly in the MSME sector. Kosovo has one of the **lowest female labour force participation**²⁶⁸ **rates in the world**, at 20.8%.²⁶⁹ Investment is needed to remove barriers to gender and

social inclusion. A financial inclusion strategy linked to a development finance assessment could identify alternate measures to expand access and make credit affordable.

128. Non-tradable sectors dominate output and employment in Kosovo and services represented the largest sector, with value added at over 50% of GDP in 2019. The manufacturing industry is small for the region at 13.4% of GDP (2020). The agriculture sector accounted for 7.4% of GDP (2020).²⁷⁰
129. A wider range of **financing instruments** is needed to boost lending to businesses. Further diversification of financial systems can create opportunities to enhance access to finance. The **Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund (KCGF)**, operational since 2016 with capital bolstered in 2020 and 2021, supports the private sector via increased access to finance for MSMEs, job creation, increased local production, improved trade balance and enhanced opportunities for underserved economic sectors. The Fund provides guarantees to financial institutions to cover the credit risk to MSMEs. Kosovo will benefit from the **EU Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans**, focusing on digitalisation and a greener economy. In 2022, the government approved a concept note to establish a

²⁶⁴ 2019 SBA Factsheet by the EC, data for 2016.

²⁶⁵ World Bank, [GDP Per Capita \(current US\\$\)](#), accessed on 2 March 2022.

²⁶⁶ World Bank, [GDP Per Capita \(PPP\)](#).

²⁶⁷ See: Open Data Kosovo, [Open Businesses Visualisations](#), accessed on 2 March 2022.

²⁶⁸ See: Regional Cooperation Council, [Labour Markets in the Western Balkans, 2019 and 2020](#), June 2021; World Bank Group and WIIW, [Western Balkans Labor Market Trends 2020](#), March 2020.

²⁶⁹ KAS, 2021. Kosovo Labour Force Survey, 2020. Pristina: KAS.

²⁷⁰ See: Ministry of Labour, [GDP by Activities \(2008-2020\)](#), p. 8.

Sovereign Fund,²⁷¹ holding to its election promise to take over strategic assets from the Kosovo Privatisation Agency (KPA) and end its mandate. The Prime Minister envisages the EUR 20 million as strengthening competitiveness and fighting corruption in public enterprise.

Kosovo Budget Allocations

130. The current government approved its **2022 budget** which exceeds EUR 2.748 billion in expenditure. Total revenues are estimated at EUR 2.346 billion (internal revenue). The remaining share is expected to come from one-off revenues or other sources (IFIs and/or bilateral partners). Budget allocation focuses on: education, health, culture, infrastructure and security (EUR 700+ million); social assistance/allowance for mothers and children (EUR 45 million); support to local producers (EUR 40 million); support to publicly owned companies offering public services (EUR 40 million); pension and other social assistance schemes (EUR 35 million); youth guarantee employment scheme (EUR 20 million).²⁷² This is the first budget developed and processed by the new government (other governments inherited budgets prepared by their predecessor) and the highest budget approved (8.7% higher than the 2021 revised budget), and its timely approval ensures continuity of ongoing projects. The budget remains the primary tool of public policy and, albeit sustainable in recent years with increases in tax revenues and expenditure ceilings due to economic growth, strong economic headwinds are likely to stress the adequacy of public

finance. Improving public spending towards growth, blended financing mechanisms and removal of horizontal and vertical imbalances will yield significant results. A detailed assessment of the evolution of living standards would allow policy makers to address poverty and other forms of inequity, target interventions for the most vulnerable, and monitor and evaluate projects designed to improve equity and reduce poverty.

131. An analysis of the financial status of the NDS and its budget allocations is premature. Assessments of sectoral financing are needed, allowing identification of structural challenges that need to be addressed: a complex administrative structure, with high functional duplication, fragmentation and improper use of economic instruments for public policy goals. NDS measures lack full financial coverage. NDS implementation represents progress in government monitoring by measuring results and performance. Ministers and institutions responsible for NDS priorities need to develop clear guidelines for implementation of NDS objectives. Requirements for NDS monitoring will focus on higher-level targets and indicators. Interaction with line ministries will shift from emphasising deadlines to measuring performance and progress towards medium- and long-term policies of objectives.
132. The **Law on Gender Equality** obliges budget institutions to apply gender-responsive planning, but it is not implemented or its implementation is unsatisfactory. Secondary legislation to institutionalise

²⁷¹ See: Prime Minister's Office, [Concept Note for the Establishment of a Sovereign Fund](#), February 2022; and [Prime Minister Announcement](#) on 26 February 2022.

²⁷² See: [Law No 08/L-066 on Budget Appropriations \(Budget for Year 2022\)](#).

gender-responsive budgeting is pending. The Agency for Gender Equality, with KAS and Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, has introduced systemic and institutional Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Responsive Budget instruments and tools (gender impact assessments on all regulatory frameworks, gender analysis, gender statistics and partial calculations of the Kosovo Gender Equality Index). Work on the Kosovo GRB regulatory framework is ongoing. About 70% of public development policies (27 sectoral/cross-sectoral strategies and four programmes/strategies [Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality, NDS, Economic Reform Programme, National Action Plan for European Integration, Strategy Against Domestic Violence] are fully or partially gender mainstreamed. A Gender Responsive Public Financial Management (GRPFM) Assessment was conducted in 2021, coordinated by the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers.

Alternative Finance

133. There is little evidence of the use of alternative finance in Kosovo. The UNDP Development Finance Assessment confirmed that the underdeveloped financial markets in Kosovo still focus financial sources on traditional sources of finance. There are no stocks and bonds markets; firms mostly obtain funding from banks. A Development Finance Road Map, developed with donors, could help new models developed to fund the SDGs lend to growth and be aligned to the EU Green Deal. The International Finance Corporation

supports development of agricultural insurance against weather shocks. These offer means to leverage SDG financing. A Human-Centred Business Model (HCBM) and its links to the SDGs could be considered.²⁷³

Potential Finance Sources for Sustainable Development Goals in Kosovo

134. **Mobilising financing and passing relevant policy and regulatory action** are key to achieve the 2030 Agenda. This requires adequate resources and appropriate frameworks. Although Kosovo was not part of the agreement reached under the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, due to its status, it provides a global framework for financing sustainable development. The global economic recession and financial turmoil of the pandemic are derailing implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and SDG achievement. Pre-pandemic, a 2020 United Nations Financing for Sustainable Development Report noted many lapses. Immediate efforts must reverse the trajectory of the pandemic and respond to the unfolding economic crisis. This must include adopting modalities to improve contribution of private capital to the SDGs.

135. The **MTEF (linked to the Medium Term Fiscal Framework and Medium Term Budget Framework)** provides a three-year public financing framework, setting budget ceilings, priorities, allocations and allotments for public investment. Kosovo needs a more forward looking,

²⁷³ [HCBM](#) is an innovative sustainable business ecosystem providing tools and inputs to the private sector, public authorities and consumers creating new businesses, and

prioritising economic, social, environmental sustainability and ethical values for more sustainable business practices.

comprehensive approach to longer-term objectives. An integrated financing framework should respond to financing challenges and the realities of a changing global landscape. To combat inequality, central policies must address the falling wage share, growing vulnerabilities, digitalisation and market concentration. Kosovo should adopt integrated national financing frameworks, adjust policies to new (data-driven) realities, and revisit labour market policies, social protection systems, fiscal policies, competition policies, financial sector regulations and strategies, and trade policies to ensure alignment with new realities. This includes digitisation of service delivery, to meet the potential Fourth industrial Revolution. **Financial innovation** can generate significant returns and multipliers across the NDS agenda. New technologies and innovation can improve market functioning. Financial technology can enhance access to finance. Big data can support better policymaking. Well-managed blended finance can strengthen development finance. New instruments, strengthened sustainability reporting, and innovative policy solutions can enable investors to pursue financial returns with positive sustainable development impact.²⁷⁴ Credit risk needs to be managed, as new technologies may cause new risks. Policymakers and regulators must examine the underlying risks of financial activities from all actors (not just one type of institution) and balance managing emerging risks and enabling experimentation and innovation. **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** has vastly declined, per World Bank

Development indicators sourced from OECD.²⁷⁵ ODA providers must take measures to ensure ODA, a critical source of development finance, can deliver on the 2030 Agenda. In line with the new functional modalities of ODA, including a shift from grants to guarantees, credits, de-risking and catalytic deployment, more is needed. There is limited data on allocation and use of ODA at national and sub-national levels. Detailed reporting and disaggregation would improve monitoring and guide policy interventions to ensure no one is left behind. Mapping ODA flows to the SDGs can help monitor and focus attention on areas to accelerate achievement of all SDGs. As humanitarian expenditure and in-donor refugee spending have risen, the share of ODA for programmable aid and budget support has decreased. Progress has helped untie aid but informal ties remain. These challenges and ODA quality must be addressed as they threaten Kosovo's ownership and leadership. **Multilateral development financing** has grown, and multilateral development banks (MDBs) have begun strengthening their collaboration. Integrated reporting on the environmental, social and governance impacts of their lending would support ongoing efforts to mainstream SDG considerations in all operations and help ensure no one is left behind.

136. The **Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOOSD)** framework would align the statistical system with the development finance landscape and enhance transparency and officially supported bilateral, multilateral and other

²⁷⁴ Interagency Taskforce on financing for development, 2019.

²⁷⁵ See: The World Bank, "[Net ODA received \(% of GNI\) – Kosovo](#)".

finances.²⁷⁶ The lack of data on financing specific areas, as in some other spheres, may hamper adequate identification of areas of interventions. Integration of the SDGs into government policies (e.g. NDS, workplan, MTEF, annual budget and other key sectoral policy documents), is necessary for full alignment with the international agenda and for local institutions to take steps towards SDG acceleration. This has been missing; only partial actions have been taken with none aimed at the SDGs.

137. Commitment to implement a **Development Finance Road Map** will allow this agenda to be more focused and gain traction with authorities. Moving towards formulation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) can put development financing at

the centre of future investment offerings and modalities. Accelerator and technical assistance support funds may be required.

138. The shift from **Funding to Finance** also leads to a fundamental shift in how investments are conceptualised and executed, around new digitised service delivery models that overcome problems of inclusion. The Build Back Better agenda cannot proceed unless alternative financing modalities are established to compliment conventional methods. Any transition to a more optimal financing ecosystem must be led by the Ministry of Finance, CBK and Ministry of Economy through public-private dialogue. The role of donor finance as catalytic first loss capital anchor investors is key, if there are anticipated ancillary and spinoff investments.

8. ANALYSIS OF RISKS

139. The sweeping victory of *Vetëvendosje!* in the February 2021 assembly elections instilled hope for the government to push through needed reforms. The subsequent gains of opposition parties in the October 2021 municipal and mayoral elections and ongoing politicised rhetoric on all sides demonstrate the risks of a highly polarised political landscape with resultant political instability. If the government is unable to deliver in its fight against corruption and in favour of political and institutional accountability, people's needs may remain unaddressed and if the expectations of the public in institutions and government are not fulfilled, civic engagement is likely to decline and risk weakening society's

resilience to economic, social and regional shocks, as well as the conflict prevention capacity of institutions and civil society.

140. Coupled with Kosovo's ineligibility for the Voluntary National Review, which would be an incentive to accelerate SDG implementation, the lack of integrated public financing for the SDGs may risk progress towards the SDGs. Potential entry points to accelerate the SDGs include: strengthened coherence and integration among sectoral strategies and policies and their monitoring; inclusion of the 2030 Agenda in the NDS; government commitment to establish a joint SDG Fund; and improved initiatives to localise the SDGs across municipalities. A whole-of-

²⁷⁶ Sector financing in the SDG era, 2018. Paris: OECD.

government approach is needed for alignment and coordination. In localising the SDGs, alignment of implementation and monitoring at municipal levels will ensure a more coherent implementation of key priorities (basic services, including water, public transport). Clear, structured interaction between local and central institutions in policy, strategy design and implementation is critical to coherence and results. In addition to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, intermediate to high risks and trends that may continue to hamper overall progress in the immediate to medium-term are:

Political:

- Slow progress on EU integration may affect Kosovo's relations with the EU.
- Slow progress in normalisation of relations with Belgrade, exacerbated through current geopolitical tensions and Kosovo's calls for Euro-Atlantic integration, could trigger renewed, long-term political instability in Kosovo and increase polarisation within Kosovo and mistrust among ethnic groups.
- Indictments by Specialist Chambers may trigger inter-community tension, lend to polarisation in society and media, weaken the government, cause instability, and adversely affect the Dialogue.
- War in Ukraine could have grave geopolitical and economic repercussions in Kosovo and the region.

Government and Legal:

- Limited progress in the rule of law agenda may affect the ability of the government to deliver on its promises to fight corruption, leading to popular disillusionment and discontent.
- Government attempts to apply the Kosovo Rule of Law in northern Kosovo may destabilise the fragile security environment in the region and trigger tensions between the K-Serb community and Kosovo institutions.
- Political and social exclusion could further marginalise key segments of society.

Economy:

- High inflation may increase pressure on the government for additional fiscal measures, simultaneously affecting its ability to deliver on reforming the health and educational systems.
- Rising food and fuel prices may create public disturbances.
- Global inflationary pressures may affect the ability of the diaspora to support Kosovo through remittances and tourism, with potentially serious ramifications for Kosovo's growth.

Demographics:


- As a result of potential visa liberalisation for Kosovo, net emigration of younger and higher-skilled workers may continue, weakening growth prospects and demographics.
- School closures during the pandemic may impact academic performance into the long-term, further reducing labour force skills and limiting Kosovo's ability to fulfill its labour market potential.

9. GAPS AND CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING THE 2030 AGENDA

141. Based on the analysis set out in the preceding sections, notably the analysis of the Kosovo context and consultations with reference and focus groups, the UNKT identified key gaps and challenges to

address in favour of the 2030 Agenda. These are summarized in the following table.

Table: Gaps and Challenges Identified in Desk Review and Stakeholder Consultations

 No Poverty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Kosovo has been classified as upper middle income by the World Bank. Poverty rates have fallen and are expected to fall further.</i>¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Target 1.1: Extreme poverty line (1.31 Euros per day in 2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2017: 5.1% below extreme poverty line² (2012: 8.1%; 2013: 5.8%; 2014: 6.9%; 2015: 5.2%³) o Consumption poverty line (1.85 Euros per day in 2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2017: 18% of Kosovo below consumption poverty line⁴ (2009: 34.5%; 2010: 29.2%; 2011: 29.7%; 2012: 22.9%; 2013: 17.6%; 2014: 21.1%; 2015: 17.6%⁵) o Target 1.2: Upper-middle-income poverty rate defined by the World Bank (\$5.5 in 2011 PPP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2005: almost 60% below upper middle-income poverty rate ▪ 2020: poverty rate increased by 2.5 percentage points amidst COVID-19 shock ▪ 2021: around 20.91% (reverted back to pre-pandemic levels) ▪ 2023: predicted to fall to 17% ▪ In the region, only Albania has a higher rate (2021: around 33.8%) - <i>However, Kosovo remains one of the poorest countries in Europe.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 2020: nominal GDP of 4,347 US Dollars per capita⁶ and 11,388 US Dollars per capita PPP⁷ are lowest in Europe o According to GNI per capita (Atlas method, current US Dollars), at 4,480 US Dollars, in 2020, Kosovo was third poorest in Europe after Ukraine and Georgia⁸ o Average net wage has decreased after COVID (2020: 416 Euros; 2019: 439 Euros)⁹ - Target 1.2: Certain vulnerable groups experience higher rates of poverty than the rest of the population. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Children (2017: 22.8%)¹⁰ o Female-headed households¹¹ o Households with three or more children (2017: 26.3% consumption poverty; 8% extreme poverty)¹² o People living in rural areas¹³ o Less educated people¹⁴ o IDPs face severe living conditions in collective housing.¹⁵ - Target 1.2: The poorest people will be most impacted by rising inflationary pressures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o In 2020, consumers spent 40.1% of their income on food/beverages; 15.7% on transport; 7.7% on housing, utilities and other fuels.¹⁶ o These categories are among the most affected by average price increases of 7.5% from Feb 2021 to Feb 2022 (e.g. bread/cereals increased by 15.7%; dairy by 11.1%; oils and fats by 32.1%; vegetables by 13.8%; electricity by 12.3%; gas by 18.8%; fuels by 28.2%).¹⁷ o 25.4% (15.8%) of Kosovo households are energy (electricity) poor, i.e. spend more than 10% on energy. Those in bottom quintile spend 97.4% of their energy expenditure on electricity.¹⁸ - Target 1.3: Kosovo's social protection system is largely imbalanced, ineffective and has had little impact on poverty. Its ability to respond rapidly to shock is undermined by the lack of unemployment insurance, rigid and narrow targeting criteria for social assistance, and a lack of a registry. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Kosovo's only poverty-targeted programme, the Social Assistance Scheme (SAS) constituted only 0.45% of GDP in 2019 (significantly lower than 2.2% average in the region).¹⁹ o The monthly compensation is not sufficient to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable. o SAS reaches only 10% of all households, excludes nearly two-thirds (65%) in bottom quintile.²⁰ o The number of SAS beneficiaries has declined (2005: >40,000 HHs; 2021: ca. 26,000 HHs).²¹ o The World Bank is working with the government on reforming the SAS in a EUR47m project.²² - Target 1.4: Economic growth has not yielded sufficient job creation nor reduced unemployment, which is particularly worrisome among the young and low-skilled workers, as well as women. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Economic growth (2020: 5.3 contraction; 2021: projected to grow by over 7%²³)

- Unemployment (2020: 25.9%²⁴; 2019: 25.7%²⁵; 2018: 29.6%²⁶; 2017: 30.5%²⁷)
- Youth unemployment (2020: 49.1%²⁸; 2019: 49.4%²⁹; 2018: 55.4%³⁰; 2017: 52.7%³¹)
- Female unemployment (2020: 32.3%³²; 2019: 34.4%³³; 2018: 33.4%³⁴; 2017: 36.6%³⁵)
- Roma and Ashkali unemployment (2020 estimate: 90%)³⁶
- Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian female IDPs unemployment (2018 estimate: 92%)³⁷
- **Target 1.4: Access to Property remains a challenge.**
 - Being able to re-occupy released properties remains a huge challenge for Serb returnees.³⁸
 - Percentage of women who own property has slightly increased (2012: 10%³⁹; 2013: 16%⁴⁰; 2018: 16.8%⁴¹; 2019: 18.5%⁴²). There is a gap between perception and reality in women's property ownership.⁴³
- **Target 1.4: Women have limited access to finance.**
 - SMEs dominate the economic landscape in Kosovo (93.1% of registered enterprises are micro, 5.9% small, 0.9% medium-sized),⁴⁴ but few Kosovo firms are owned by women (only 8.6% of small firms have female participation in ownership, 3.4% a female top manager⁴⁵).
 - Access to finance is a major or severe constraint to growth.⁴⁶ Over 90% of loans require collateral, at 267% of the loan amount.⁴⁷
 - Smaller SMEs in Kosovo have harder access to finance than larger firms.⁴⁸
 - Women face additional challenges, stemming from traditional norms and rare property ownership.⁴⁹
 - Women have consistently registered businesses at lower rates than men, influenced by sociocultural resistance, insufficient capital and unequal access to credit.⁵⁰
 - Only about 15% of women entrepreneurs have used commercial bank loans.⁵¹
- **Target 1.5: Certain vulnerable groups (children and youth; certain categories of women such as single mothers or single older women; elders) are more likely to have persistently low incomes and be more vulnerable to shocks.**
 - Gini coefficient for Kosovo shows a slight increase in inequality since 2012 (2012: 26.2; 2017: 25.5;⁵² 2020: 29⁵³)
- **Target 1.5: The informal economy remains among the highest in Europe, although it has shrunk since 2013 and, due to COVID fiscal measures, further gains in formal employment can be expected.**
 - Informal economy is estimated at ca. 31%⁵⁴, 32%⁵⁵, 35%⁵⁶, 37%⁵⁷ or 38.8%⁵⁸ of GDP, among the highest in Europe.⁵⁹ It is, however, considerably lower than 43% estimates for 2013.⁶⁰
 - In 2021: informal workers increasingly registered to take advantage of COVID-19 response measures, suggesting significant gains in formal employment.⁶¹ Formal employees increased by 9.7% compared to 2020 (Kosovo Pensions Savings Trust data on active contributors).⁶²
 - Informality leads to unfair competition, shrinking tax base and a reduced Kosovo budget.⁶³ The value of uncollected direct taxes has been estimated at 107 million Euros.⁶⁴
 - It also leads to reduced wages and purchasing power, limited access to finance, insecurity and exclusion from benefits.
 - Most Roma and Ashkali work informally (unemployment ca. 90%).⁶⁵
 - 30% of women in Kosovo's private sector work without a contract.⁶⁶
 - Agriculture has highest percentage of informality (70% of the workforce undeclared⁶⁷).



Zero Hunger

- **Target 2.1:** Exposure to Food Nutrition security risks arises from poverty and high unemployment coinciding with low income, high food expenditure, high dependency on remittances, and sharp agricultural and food trade deficits.
- **Target 2.4:** Institutional capacities are insufficient to implement policies and strategies on food, trade, agricultural, and food safety net policies.
- Inefficient, near-subsistence farming is common, the result of small plots, limited mechanisation, and a lack of technical expertise. The agriculture sector accounts for a significant share of informal employment.⁶⁸

- Poorer households are more vulnerable to rising electricity tariffs and will likely cut down other types of consumption such as food, health, or education.
- Inflation rate in 2021 in Kosovo was at 6.7%, resulting in food and other consumables prices increase, affecting basic products and most vulnerable groups of society.⁶⁹



Good Health and Well-being

- **Target 3.c:** 3.1% of GDP was allocated to health sector in 2022, lower than in 2021.⁷⁰ (By comparison: Albania: 2.4%; Serbia: 5.07%; Montenegro 5.06%, and Bosnia and Hercegovina 6.21%.)
- **Target 3.2:** Infant mortality, 16 children under the age of 5 years die per 1,000 live births. Two times higher amongst K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities⁷¹; nearly three times that of EU countries.
- Limited access to health care for persons living in rural areas; population tends to bypass family medicine centres and directly seek out specialised health care.
- **Target 3.7:** Weak monitoring and accountability, including illegal practices (e.g. clandestine abortions), and limited implementation of related policies.
- Poor health-care services for women and girls with disabilities; health professionals not adequately trained.
- **Target 3.8:** Out of pocket health expenditures are extremely high in Kosovo, amounting to almost 80% and pushing many into poverty. Generally, people are dissatisfied with access to and quality of health services, with unmet health needs causing many to seek medical care outside Kosovo.
- **3.C:** Many capacities of health workforce do not match health needs and expectations of the population, which leads to decreasing prestige and bypassing of primary health care services.
- **Target 3.1:** Current data on maternal deaths make it difficult to assess the maternal mortality rate).
- **Target 3.9:** is addressed through the Law on Tobacco, which lacks an effective implementation and monitoring mechanism.
- Poorer households are more vulnerable to rising electricity tariffs and will likely cut down other types of consumption such as food, health, or education.
- Main sources of air pollution and climate change are well documented in Kosovo and urgent action is needed to significantly reduce their negative impact on health.



Quality Education

- 3.2% of GDP allocated to education in 2022, lower than 2021.⁷² (Comparison to some EU countries: Sweden 6.9%; Denmark 6.3% while average for the EU in 2017 was 4.7%.)
- Parallel educational systems, divided along ethnic lines between K-Albanians and K-Serbs, result in differing approaches to education.
- Lack of infrastructure, poor teacher performance and limited training budget, inappropriate teaching materials, and lack of quality assurance mechanisms impact education quality.
- Kosovo has ranked consistently at the lowest level of achievement in Europe (PISA). With some 345,000 students out of school between March to September 2020, these rankings might be even lower.
- Institutions have not prioritised Early Childhood Development and Education.
- K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities have limited access to education due to patriarchal values and gender stereotypes.
- **Target 4.2:** Preschool enrolment has been consistently low (36% in 2017)
- **Targets 4.1; 4.2; 4.c:** Kosovo has shown variable achievement, with progress on some and advanced progress on others. Data is still missing on the third indicator.



Gender Equality

- **Target 5. C:** Robust, advanced legislation on gender equality, but lack of implementation.
- Gender-based discrimination infiltrates access to services, decision-making, the economy, and the judiciary.
- Transitional justice and justice for women victims of sexual and other forms of violence has not reached most survivors mainly due to social and cultural stigma and low prioritisation.
- The labour market is male-dominated, excluding 80% of women from employment.
- SGBV (domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, sexual harassment) persists.
- **Target 5.4:** Women are not well represented in political decision-making and senior government roles.
- Women comprise 52.1% of people with a university degree but only 12.7% of them are employed.
- Data is not available for the rest of the indicators.

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Clean Water and Sanitation

- Kosovo faces water scarcity and one of the lowest water resource development and storage levels in the region.
- Kosovo is increasingly vulnerable to flooding and dry spells.
- There is an urgent need to build on strengths of the water supply sector and transition to wastewater treatment, while improving service delivery in irrigation.
- Water resources are poorly managed. Kosovo's institutional capacity to deliver on mandates and integrated water resource planning is weak and its enforcement of plans and rules are haphazard.
- 40—55% of water wells are contaminated bacteriologically.
- About 90% of the population were estimated to be connected to the public water system, including in rural areas, while up to 10% have no access to water or independent water supplies. Of that, only around 49% of K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities have access to treated drinking water sources.⁷³
- **Target 6.1** has seen some progress.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Affordable and Clean Energy

- Kosovo relies on energy production from coal which contributes to environmental hazards.
- Around 90 % of energy is produced by coal power plants contributing to various pollutants of the air, with hydropower plants, wind farms and photovoltaic panels providing the remaining 10%.⁷⁴
- Environmental considerations are integrated into sectoral policies and legislation but marginally.
- The electricity system is considerably improved with reduced losses and increased coverage of supply. However, Kosovo is yet at an early stage in diversifying the sector, focusing more on energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.
- The NDS aim of a 192-hour per year reduction of power outage has been achieved.
- SDG target 7.1 has yet to be met while, for SDG target 7.2, there is no available data, although Kosovo has planned an auction for wind power supported by EBRD.
- 25.4% of households are considered energy poor. Those in the bottom quintile spend 97.4% of their energy expenditure on electricity.⁷⁵

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Decent Work and Economic Growth

- **Target 8.5** Kosovo continues facing high unemployment at 25.8%.⁷⁶ In 2020 due to Covid-19, economic growth contracted at 5.3% with a growth retrieval in 2021 expected by 7.5%. Economic growth has not coincided with robust job creation in the private sector.
- Job opportunities are lacking, especially for young people, lending to migration and a corresponding loss of human capital. Yet, measures are not in place to address this issue.
- **Target 8.7** The informal sector is comprised of about one-third of Kosovo's workers, among the most in Europe, while informal jobs are insecure and exclude workers from many benefits. It is assumed however that recent

government measures in response to Covid-19 may have triggered some degree of formalization, which remains to be seen.

- **Target 8.8** Women’s low participation in the labour market is attributed to low salaries; limited access to child and elderly care; lack of family-friendly schedules; high cost of maternity leave for employers; patriarchal social norms and discrimination.
- Migration among youth has declined considerably since 2016. Still, concerns persist that young people will leave Kosovo due to lack of jobs and incomes. Release of Covid-19 measures and easiness of movements towards other countries of Europe, with consular services reopened, may stimulate some increase in migration.
- NEET numbers remain significantly high amongst youth at 29.8%, of which 29.9 male and 29.6 female.⁷⁷
- Economic Freedom (2021: 86/177 “Moderately Free”⁷⁸; 2020: 58/178 “Moderately Free”)



Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- **Target 9.c:** 97 % of Kosovo internet penetration is in 2022,⁷⁹ maintaining yet showing increasing trend from the past years.
- 81% of the surveyed population use the Internet daily.
- Public expenditure on infrastructure is higher than on innovation and human capital.
- **Target 9.2:** Globally, Kosovo ranks 150th in industry (mineral mining, construction materials, base metals, leather, machinery, appliances, food/beverages, textiles).
- The annual percentage of growth in industrial production is estimated at just 1.2%.
- Private sector incentives (industry production) are vital to boost economic development.
- Most of the processing industry was destroyed by the conflict, spurring high imports. Investments are lacking.



Reduced Inequalities

- Diaspora capital remains underutilised and is currently used mainly for consumption.
- Kosovo lacks innovative policies, which could have stimulated or boosted exports and attracted greater foreign investment. Net FDI inflows are projected to be around 4.7 percent of GDP for 2021, higher than 2020 (4.2 percent) and 2019 (2.7%).⁸⁰
- Rule of law enforcements, reduced corruption and improved business investment climates need to be pursued robustly to attract more FDIs.
- Income gaps and inequalities disadvantage women.
- From the entire working age participation of 29.3% among 15–64-year-olds in Q1 2021, female employed count for only 15.9% compared to male of 42.8%.⁸¹
- Inclusion of children from K-Roma, K-Ashkali and K-Egyptian communities in the education needs to be enhanced.
- Kosovo has the widest gender gap in labour force participation in the Western Balkans.
- **Target 10.c:** Remittances transfer costs particularly for small amounts remains high.⁸²



Sustainable Cities and Communities

- Since 1999, rapid development has increased urbanisation, and resulted in uncontrolled growth in urban areas, a loss of agricultural land, infrastructure overload, traffic congestion, increased mileage and carbon emissions, and pollution and related health impacts.
- Construction without a permit remains unresolved as it is considered “dead capital”, since such construction cannot be registered in the cadastre, nor legally transferred, used or put as a mortgage collateral.
- Increased migration (rural to urban and abroad) by educated young people has decreased the rural population under 15 by 10.8 %; people over 64 years increased 20.7 % (2012—2017).

- Urbanisation has been chaotic due to a lack of data for planning and budgets.
- Evident gaps in the rural-urban partnership can serve as a basis for spatial planning.
- The need for affordable housing remains high particularly amongst youth and vulnerable groups.
- Green and public spaces have constantly shrank over the past years.



Responsible Consumption and Production

- Extremely limited data renders it difficult to analyse trends effectively.
- **Target 12.4:** An increase of 40 % of municipal solid waste treatment between 2015 – 2019 enabled by share of population connected to waste collection.⁸³
- **Target 12.5** Waste recycling and chemicals management remains still poor with delayed investments and targets accomplishment by the sectorial strategy.⁸⁴
- **Target 12.b** Investments in agrotourism, both private and public have increased continuously, promoting rural job creation and local culture and products, but tools to monitor developments and statistics remain rather scarce.



Climate Action

- Kosovo committed to address climate challenges (Strategy and Action Plan for Climate Change), in support of environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation. Its Climate Change Strategy (2019—2028) shows its climate change mitigation/adaptation and sustainable development plans.
- (WHO)Climate change adaptation is lacking and more actions are needed in order to improve the resilience of different sectors to climate change impacts. CC adaptation is also needed to protect human health and health infrastructure.
- Kosovo suffers from environmental pollution (especially air) and the degradation of natural resources, each of which severely affects livelihood opportunities and public health.
- The transition to a green economy, based on existing plans, has been slow. (WHO) EU green agenda is expected to have an impact in Kosovo by strengthening the climate and environment considerations in EU supported projects and programmes.⁸⁵
- Kosovo is not signatory to international environmental conventions (e.g. United Nations Framework Climate Change Convention and Paris Agreement). Access to funding mechanisms (e.g. GEF and its Small Grants Programme and GCF) is limited.
- Socioeconomic vulnerability may exacerbate the impact of climate change; the poor are disproportionately impacted due to limited capacity to alter habits or flee unhealthy areas.
- Kosovo committed to address climate challenges (Strategy and Action Plan for Climate Change), in support of environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation. Its Climate Change Strategy (2019—2028) shows its climate change mitigation/adaptation and sustainable development plans.
- Climate change adaptation is lacking and more actions are needed in order to improve the resilience of different sectors to climate change impacts. CC adaptation is also needed to protect human health and health infrastructure.
- Kosovo suffers from environmental pollution (especially air) and the degradation of natural resources, each of which severely affects livelihood opportunities and public health.
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- Socioeconomic vulnerability may exacerbate the impact of climate change; the poor are disproportionately impacted due to limited capacity to alter habits or flee unhealthy areas.



Life Below Water

- Not applicable to Kosovo.



Life on Land

- **Target 15.2** There is a high risk of biodiversity degradation due to the lack of human capacities to control and mitigate risks from illegal logging and other illegal activities (hunting, urbanisation/spatial planning).
- **Target 15.3** Municipal capacity and central policies to protect forests and agricultural land need to be increased.



Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

- **Target 16.4** Money laundering is estimated at 2 to 5 % of GDP's South-Eastern Europe and Kosovo does not seem to make an exception.⁸⁷
- **Target 16.5** Kosovo improved 17 positions in the corruption perception index in 2021.⁸⁸
- **Target 16.6** Existing mechanisms for coordination and implementation of human rights are ineffective.
 - o **Target 16.6:** World Press Freedom Index (2021: 78/180; 2020: 70/180⁸⁹)
 - o Global Peace Index (2021: 80/163⁹⁰; 2020: 85/163)
 - o Global Freedom Status (2021: 56, Partly Free⁹¹; 2020: 54, Partly Free)
- **Target 16.10** Necessary legal frameworks are in place and meet the highest EU standards, but local institutions struggle to ensure respect for human rights.
- The effectiveness of institutions in prosecuting and sentencing on SGBV cases is questioned.



Partnership for the Goals

- **Target 17.1** There is a lack of domestic resource mobilisation to improve revenue collection (e.g. tax).
- **Target 17** Public financial resources increased over years to reach € 2.75 bln from about € 2.5 bln in 2021.⁹²The need to a better targeted financing policies and alternative financing solutions triggering locally mobilized resources remains evident.
- **Target 17.4 Debt sustainability**
- **Target 17.5 Investment promotion**
- **Target 17.11 Exports improved**
- **Target 17.17 Partnerships** with NGOs and business community improved
- Partnerships with cultural festivals (DokuFest, Anibar) have been pursued to promote SDGs.
- Partnerships with business community, KCC, CSR established and expanded in promoting and accelerating SDGs implementations.

¹ World Bank Group, [Macro Poverty Outlook for Europe and Central Asia](#), page 60.

² KAS and World Bank Group, [Consumption Poverty in Kosovo](#), May 2019.

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- ³ KAS and World Bank Group, [Consumption poverty in Kosovo 2012-2015](#).
- ⁴ KAS and World Bank Group, [Consumption Poverty in Kosovo](#), May 2019.
- ⁵ KAS and World Bank Group, [Consumption poverty in Kosovo 2012-2015](#); INDEP, [Kosovo and 2030 Agenda](#), July 2019. World Bank, *GDP Per Capita (current US\$)*, accessed on 2 March 2022, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=XK>
- ⁷ World Bank, *GDP Per Capita (PPP)*, accessed on 2 March 2022, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=XK>
- ⁸ World Bank, *GNI per capita (current US\$)*, accessed on 25 March 2022, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD?locations=XK>
- ⁹ KAS, *Wage Level in Kosovo, 2020*, 28 May 2021, <<https://ask.rks-gov.net/en/kosovo-agency-of-statistics/add-news/wage-level-in-kosovo-2020>>
- ¹⁰ KAS and World Bank Group, *Consumption Poverty in Kosovo*, May 2019, p. 14; UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Kosovo*, 2019.
- ¹¹ KAS and World Bank Group, *Consumption Poverty in Kosovo*, May 2019, page 11
- ¹² KAS and World Bank Group, *Consumption Poverty in Kosovo*, May 2019, p. 14; UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Kosovo*, 2019.
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