

---

---

*In a country where judges will issue a mere 200 euro fine for threatening an investigative journalist with death, Kosovo's Fourth Estate cannot be regarded as an important asset to a democratic society.*



KOSOVO

Kosovo faced protests from the start of 2012 when, on a cold January day, opposition party Vetvendosje organized a massive protest that aimed to block all goods coming from Serbia to Kosovo through the border at Merdar. The protest turned violent when Kosovo police brutally intervened. Journalists covering the event were not spared; a freelance journalist was knocked unconscious when an officer struck him, though he recovered without serious complications. The attack was filmed, but the police never apologized.

In late October, Vetvendosje organized another protest that met an even harsher police response. This time more than 60 protesters were arrested, some brutally beaten by the police, many were hospitalized, and one remains in a coma. Though the event was without doubt the top news of the day, with some media covering it live, it was not a breaking news item on Radio Television Kosovo's (RTV) main news telecast. To critics, this was a major signal of state financing putting the editorial independence of public television at risk.

Despite these events, the overall MSI score slightly increased from last year, showing that some progress has been made. Two major media achievements marked 2012. One was the removal of Articles 37 and 38 from the government's draft of the penal code. Two infamous provisions, one extending criminal liability from a publisher to its reporters, and the other requiring disclosure of confidential sources, were finally removed from the bill after extended lobbying by journalists' associations and the parliamentary opposition.

The second achievement was the government's decision to exempt broadcast media from the 16% VAT tax, a long-term demand of the media community. Still, 2012 was a year of financial crises for the media in Kosovo. Two daily newspapers that had operated for more than six years closed due to financial constraints. The resulting job losses, especially considering the increasing number of young journalists graduating every year from university, were particularly jarring for media professionals in the country.

The plurality of news sources remained a positive force in the Albanian-language media, with 105 radio and television stations, eight daily newspapers, and 11 cable operators, and 50 percent of the country with Internet access. While quantity is sufficient, however, the quality of journalism leaves much to be desired.

Crimes against journalists continue. While no journalists were killed in 2012, at least five were physically assaulted and 10 were threatened or intimidated. The perpetrators usually come from business groups, though occasionally from political factions. As a country that aspires to become a member of the European Union, Kosovo needs better mechanisms to protect the mission of the free press. When a judge issues a €200 fine to a businessman for threatening an investigative journalist with death, the Fourth Estate cannot be regarded as an important asset to a democratic society.

# KOSOVO at a glance

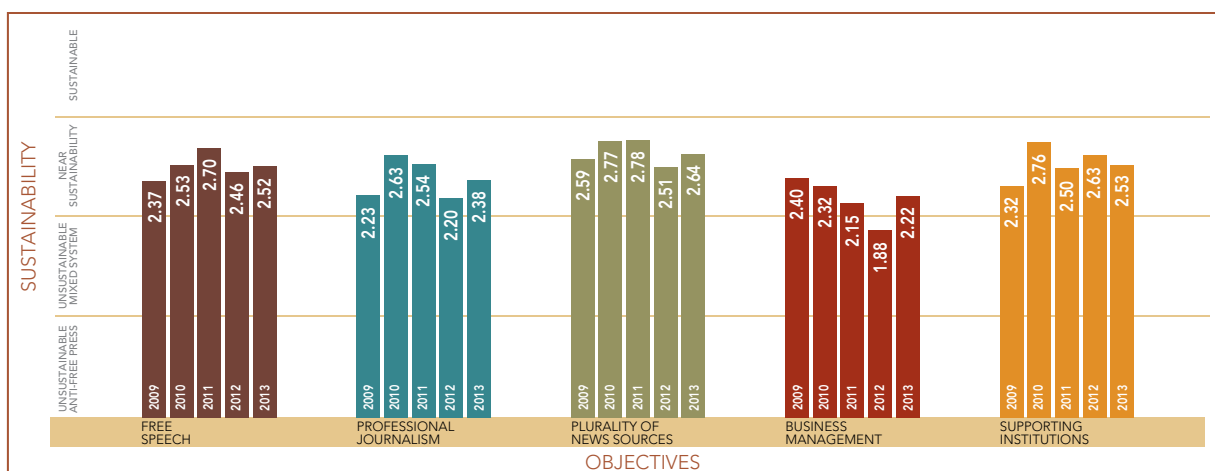
## GENERAL

- > Population: 1,847,708 (July 2013 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > Capital City: Prishtina
- > Ethnic groups (% of population): Albanians 92%, other (Serb, Bosniak, Gorani, Roma, Turk, Ashkali, Egyptian) 5% (2008, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > Religion: Muslim, Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > Languages: Albanian (official), Serbian (official), Bosnian, Turkish, Roma (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > GNI (2011-Atlas): 6.321 billion (World Bank Development Indicators)
- > GNI per capita (2011-Atlas): \$3,520 (World Bank Development Indicators)
- > Literacy rate: 91.9% (male 96.6%, female 87.5%) (2007 Census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > President or top authority: President Atifete Jahjaga (since April 7, 2011)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > Number of print outlets, radio stations, television stations: Print—9 daily newspapers; Radio Stations—92; Television Stations—22 (Independent Media Commission, 2009)
- > Newspaper Circulation Statistics: *Koha Ditore* is the leading newspaper, followed by *Kosova Sot* (Index Kosova, July 2009)
- > Broadcast Ratings: RTK 52%, KTV 28%, RTV21 49%; Radio Dukagjini 8%, Radio Kosova 5%, Radio 21 2% (Index Kosova, 2009)
- > Annual advertising revenue in the media sector: N/A
- > News agencies: Kosovo Live, Kosovo Press
- > Internet usage: 53% of households have Internet access (INDEX Kosova, 2009)

## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: KOSOVO



## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2013: OVERALL AVERAGE SCORES



### CHANGE SINCE 2012

▲ (increase greater than .10) □ (little or no change) ▼ (decrease greater than .10)

**Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):** Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

**Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):** Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

**Near Sustainability (2-3):** Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

**Sustainable (3-4):** Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

Scores for all years may be found online at [http://www.irex.org/system/files/EE\\_msiscorers.xls](http://www.irex.org/system/files/EE_msiscorers.xls)

## OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.52

Since the declaration of independence in February 2008, the Kosovo Assembly has passed a number of laws; some quickly as they were considered as basic laws necessary for statehood. Among these were laws that guarantee freedom of speech, establish media regulatory bodies and regulate the role and functioning of the public radio and television. The Constitution of Kosovo guarantees freedom of expression, which includes the right to express oneself and to disseminate and receive information, opinions, and other messages without impediment. The EU's influence over domestic media law for the nascent country has also been a consistent positive force. For this reason, Objective 1 scores have generally been decent, with 2013's score increasing slightly from last year's 2.46.

The panelists agree that legal provisions in Kosovo guarantee free speech. They mentioned tangible results that upgraded the status of media in 2012. In addition to the removal of Articles 37 and 38 from the Penal Code, two laws were passed, one on an Independent Media Commission and another on public broadcasting. Despite the removal of Article 38, the law does not protect the confidentiality of sources yet, though there is an initiative by an opposition

political party to pass a law that would explicitly protect the sources of journalists.

Although the law protects their profession, journalists' work is not without danger, as seen in the incidents of assault and threats in 2012. Such intimidation remains a habit. Arbana Xharra, editor of Zeri, explained how the methods are changing from the classical physical threats to legal tactics, as journalists are targeted in court. "The number of journalists being sued is increasing. When an investigative report is published, the subject immediately sues the journalist for libel," Xharra said. Kreshnik Gashi, a journalist at the Balkan Investigative Research Network, blames existing legal provisions that he said are unfavorable to journalists. "The law against defamation and insult allows any citizen to sue the journalist in court without providing any arguments that proves the story wrong. The burden of proof falls upon the journalist. This practice is time-consuming and quite costly for a journalist who faces trial," Gashi said.

Threats and lawsuits commonly emanate from business interests, and rarely from government officials. The panelists agree that the latter usually try to prevent certain stories from going public during the investigative phase, but rarely act once the news is public. Some will take their cases to court, though, as an immediate reaction seeking to persuade the public of their innocence. Kosovo's courts are overloaded with cases; some dragging on for years before the trial even begins.

The body in charge of licensing broadcast media is the Independent Media Commission. Panelist Eugen Saracini of RTV 21 said he believed that licensing procedures are in line with EU standards. "There is a mechanism in place that requires [television stations] to be transparent both in terms of program content and budget turnover," Saracini said. Print media, such as newspapers and magazines, do not need a license; instead, there is a simple registration procedure. The panelists expressed concerns about the functioning of online news portals, which continue to operate without licenses. Because they can easily register and become lucrative businesses, their number has been increasing in recent years. News portals are not transparent in terms of their ownership and the composition of their editorial boards. The panelists said that news portals and cable television operators require better regulatory oversight.

All panelists praised the government's decision early this year to exempt all broadcast media from VAT tax. Kosovo media organizations have been advocating for many years for the removal of VAT for media outlets. "Removal of 16% VAT for broadcast media is very important, and from now

### LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

#### FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing or registration of media protects a public interest and is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against media professionals, citizen reporters, and media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > The law protects the editorial independence of state of public media.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily available; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media, journalists, and citizens.
- > Media outlets' access to and use of local and international news and news sources is not restricted by law.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

**“The number of journalists being sued is increasing. When an investigative report is published, the subject immediately sues the journalist for libel,” Xharra said.**

on media will not pass along the 16% tax to advertisers. This will encourage media to use the latest technologies,” Saracini said.

The panelists assessed continued threats against journalists as being at a level intolerable for a country aspiring to EU membership. Scores were beaten, threatened, and intimidated in the past year. Panelists brought up the case of Halil Matoshi, a columnist of *Koha Ditore* newspaper, who was beaten by three unidentified men. Vehbi Kajtazi, an investigative reporter for the outlet, received the Kosovo Association of Professional Journalists’ 2012 award for the best written story on corruption—and then received death threats from the brother of a man indicted for corruption based on his reporting. Yet the panelists said threats and assaults against journalists do not cause any public outcry—somehow, society is getting used to them. “When a journalist presses charges against someone who has threatened to kill him or her, when the perpetrator is found guilty he gets a fine of €200,” Gashi said, adding that the justice system must provide more protective measures for journalists.

Libel and insult in Kosovo are civil, not criminal offenses. However, civil libel cases are frequently brought against journalists, and as such, libel remains a weak aspect of Kosovo’s media sustainability.

State broadcaster RTK, which consists of a television channel and two radio channels, continues to be financed by the government, which the panelists said jeopardizes editorial independence. The law passed in 2012 states that RTK would be financed by the state for the first three years until a new form of fee subscription is implemented. Panelists fear this is making the broadcaster an easy target for government influence. Bekim Hasani, the director of RTK television, admits that there is room for criticism, but he sees RTK as a mirror of Kosovo society as a whole. “We must increase the level of professionalism in order to resist any influence that may come from outside. The problem that we are facing is the tendency of certain journalists to lean towards certain political or business groups,” Hasani said.

Panelists criticized RTK for not providing sufficient coverage of news that is not favorable to the government. They

noted the case of the Vetvendosje protest, which drew sparse coverage from RTK. Saracini said the appointment of the RTK board is politically influenced and that the board members are carefully chosen by the Kosovo Assembly to push a certain agenda. Saracini, who manages a commercial television stations that is a direct competitor to RTK, said he believes the state broadcaster’s annual budget is much higher than that of commercial stations, making the playing field uneven.

The new law on public broadcasting calls for RTK to launch a second, Serbian-language TV channel, RTK 2. But a year after the adoption of the law, this has not happened. Predrag Radonjic, a Kosovo Serb journalist working for Radio Kim, says the government does not seem interested in a practical resolution to this problem. “An easier option to materialize RTK 2 would have been to merge local Serb TV channels operating in Kosovo into one channel with national frequency,” says Radonjic. There are at least four local TV channels in Serbian. Financing RTK 2 remains a challenge, as the law does not specify how to do so.

Public information is available, and the law regulates access to public documents, but implementation of that law has fallen short. Panelist Muhamet Jahiri of the Kosovo Journalists’ Union says a new law is needed to clearly identify and categorize all public documents that are state secrets. Officials of public institutions often claim that certain documents cannot be released due to their secret content. Access to information by bloggers is even more difficult, because they lack media credibility, unlike other journalists who are identified by their outlet. Besa Luci of the Kosovo 2.0 blog says it is quite difficult for bloggers to get interviews with public officials. Officials fear media pressure if they deny access to information, but they are less worried about that when it comes to bloggers, who lack the institutional support of larger media entities.

Media outlets are able to use local and international news sources, and no website or foreign news channel is restricted and blocked in Kosovo.

Journalists also do not face any official restrictions on entry to the profession. These were the best performing indicators in the index and two of the few considered sustainable overall. However, exit is more common than entry. In recent years many journalists have left the profession for jobs with the government or at major public and private companies. In some cases, even the most vocal journalists have ended up working for companies they once targeted in their investigative reporting.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.38

Objective 2's score rose modestly from 2012. More than 100 students graduate from journalism schools every year in Kosovo, the majority aspiring to work in the field. Yet, the quality of professional journalism leaves much to be desired. Performance on the individual indicators varied greatly, with objective reporting and self-censorship practices both scoring well below the indicator average, while the panel found a decent balance between news and entertainment and found somewhat appropriate the media's general coverage of key events and issues.

As the panelists explained, professional standards are mostly upheld, but they did not dismiss cases where journalists failed to follow them, especially when it comes to the conduct of necessary background research and the use of relevant sources. "You can read a story in the newspaper which is built entirely on anonymous sources. Some do not even bother to recheck whether such claims are true," Besim Abazi said.

Print media have developed their own code of ethics applying to anyone working for a print outlet. The Council of Written Media, a supervising body, often reacts publicly when these standards are violated. Some panelists claimed the standards are too strict, and that the nascent media community cannot hope to rise to them.

The panelists could not remember any cases in which media professionals have accepted payments or gifts in exchange for certain types of coverage. Still, they did not

"You can read a story in the newspaper which is built entirely on anonymous sources. Some do not even bother to recheck whether such claims are true," Besim Abazi said.

cases where television reporters would appear in front of certain businesses, causing some suspicion that they were compensated for choosing such a location.

Self-censorship is practiced to a certain degree, usually on the editorial level. Saracini says that self-censorship is not imposed but rather self-created, as the journalists who practice it are trying to avoid losing possible political benefits.

Overall, journalists cover all key events and issues in the country. The modest variety of sources requires most outlets to cover most events, for fear of being scooped, though in the case of the Vetvendosje protests, the limits of this competitive pressure were made clear. Panelists praised Kosovo media for fair and objective reporting on the wiretapping scandal involving the prime minister, another government minister, a member of parliament, and a mayor. In the midst of an investigation carried out by the EULEX (EU Rule of Law) mission, someone leaked four different phone intercepts to the public domain. The report triggered a harsh reaction from the opposition. At first the government denied the authenticity of the recordings, only to back off after EU officials confirmed their authenticity. This scandal made the headlines for a few days.

Pay levels differ among media outlets. Local radio and television stations pay less than public and national-level outlets. In average journalists working for commercial media receive between €300 and €400 per month, while the average salary in public media is around €600. The overall average salary in Kosovo is around €350. This means that journalists are paid almost the same rate as teachers and civil servants. Kosovo correspondents working for foreign media, such as Voice of America and Al-Jazeera Balkans, receive better salaries.

Implementation of labor laws has not yet been fully realized at media organizations, especially when it comes to working hours, an issue that concerned some of the panelists.

News and entertainment are well balanced in Kosovo's media. The reason why this indicator received the highest score for this objective is that the Independent Media Commission closely watches this issue and is quick to issue fines for those television channels that exceed the

### JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

#### PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well-sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption and retain qualified personnel within the media profession.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exist (investigative, economics/business, local, political).



maximum time for advertisements. This is not the case with the less-regulated cable operator market, as some offer some packages with fewer informational channels to their customers.

Facilities and equipment for gathering and producing news are modern, but not to the level they should be to successfully make the shift from analog to digital television. As the 2015 deadline for turning to digital broadcasting approaches, Kosovo has not taken any concrete steps to prepare electronic media for this shift. There is still no law that would oblige broadcast media to initiate the process, and even the public media is behind and seriously risks failing to meet the deadline.

Niche reporting exists, but while the Kosovo media has good investigative reporters, there are no journalists that specialize in covering health, energy, or science. Bloggers and some enterprising new outlets have provided an alternative source to explore long-held societal taboos. Luci's *Kosovo 2.0* print magazine version of her website is a good example, covering issues that are not sufficiently debated in mainstream media. The latest issue of *Kosovo 2.0*, on sexual orientation, created a public debate that other media picked up on.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.64

This objective has traditionally received the highest score in the MSI's analysis of Kosovo. This year was no exception, as panelists agreed that multiple news sources exist in the country and that citizens can get reliable and objective news, continuing a modest positive trend towards long-term sustainability.

Almost all types of media exist in Kosovo, including public and private broadcasters, print, and online media. The use of text-message news alerts has not yet gained popularity. One public and two private television stations have national frequencies, reaching almost the entire population. Cable television is spreading very fast, so far covering nearly half of the country's territory and providing a mix of domestic and foreign channels. Satellite television is also available, but most people prefer cable. Internet penetration is increasing. In general, legal provisions do not restrict the citizenry's access to domestic or international media.

Panelists were concerned with the way public television is financed. The law on RTK states that for a transitional three-year period, RTK's annual income from the state will be 0.7 percent of Kosovo's budget, which together with its own income puts the broadcaster's annual budget at

more than €12 million. State financing is a worrying issue for panelists who believe that editorial independence is at stake. Hasani, the RTK television director, dismissed the notion of partisanship favoring the governing party and asserted that RTK provides balanced coverage between the government and the opposition. "Normally the government has more activities than the opposition, therefore sometimes it is difficult to have a perfect balance. In general, both parties are given equal air space, quantitatively and qualitatively speaking," he said. Other panelists disagreed, seeing a tendency of RTK to lean towards the governing party. They mentioned the case when the former director of Kosovo's intelligence agency publicly joined the governing party; RTK aired a long report about it and considered it high-priority news. In terms of providing educational and cultural programs, Saracini said that RTK falls short despite being obliged to do so by law. "Sometimes RTK looks more like a commercial television station than a public one, broadcasting sports events instead of educational programs," he said.

There are news agencies in Kosovo, the most active of which is Kosova Press. Luci said not all of the agencies provide original reporting, but rather republish and cite other media. "Agencies tend to attract as many visitors as possible," she said, referring to their propensity towards sensational reporting, valueless lists, and other web search optimization techniques.

Private media do produce original content, and indeed there is stiff competition among them. "Each medium produces its own content, but there is not much difference among news," says Abazi. In general, private media do not rely on

#### MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE, OBJECTIVE NEWS.

##### PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > Plurality of public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet, mobile) exist and offer multiple viewpoints.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted by law, economics, or other means.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for media outlets.
- > Private media produce their own news.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge the objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources
- > The media provide news coverage and information about local, national, and international issues.

public outlets for material. RTK has contracts with Kosova Press and Reuters, among others.

The level of transparency of media ownership depends on the type of outlet. Broadcast media ownership is relatively transparent, print media ownership is somewhat transparent, and online outlet ownership is not transparent at all. It is not obvious to the public who controls a news portal and, more importantly, who is the editorial team. Some of them function only with a copy-paste approach without producing their own content. And there is no official body in place to regulate online media. Kosovo does not have media monopolies or oligarchies.

Minority issues are covered in the public media, and some minority groups have their own programs on RTK. Specialty media is aimed at minority communities. Establishing RTK 2 would provide more programs for Kosovo's largest minority, the Serbs.

In general, Kosovo media provide sufficient news coverage and information about local, national, and international issues. Yet Luci said that most of the media coverage is about government activities and stories pertaining to Kosovo's status in the international arena: "Less space and time is given stories that would explore problems pertaining to communities, different groups, the hardships of people and other social problems."

#### OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.22

Objective 4 significantly improved from last year, with nearly all indicators improving slightly. The public media continued to benefit from subsidies, ultimately furnished by the EU, which have supported business operations. Two other private television stations that broadcast nationally, RTV 21 and KTV, also operate as efficient and well-managed enterprises. Each follows a business plan and has separate departments for accounting, marketing and human resources.

From a broader perspective, it becomes apparent that not all media outlets are financially stable. Print media, local media, and bloggers have difficulties generating the revenues they need. Due to financial constraints, two daily newspapers stopped publication last year; *Infopress* shut down permanently, and *Lajm* suspended its operations indefinitely. Both had been in the market for more than six years. *Infopress* had been relying mainly on government ads and as such was considered a partisan newspaper. But when the law on public procurement changed, requiring that

the government advertise on its own websites rather than in newspapers, print media was directly affected. This is another reason why the price of daily newspapers has risen, with some reaching 50 cents for the first time in Kosovo's short history.

The panelists expressed their fears that other newspapers too have difficulties making ends meet. "Some newspapers have significantly reduced staff," Jahiri said, and in addition to these job cuts, some organizations delay payment of staff salaries up to three months. "2012 is the year of financial crisis for Kosovo media," said Saracini, despite the fact that the government has exempted the media from paying VAT. "Financial instability to some extent is affecting editorial independence," Gashi said. Panelists did say they believed that online media could be a source of work for unemployed journalists.

Private media rely mostly on advertisements for revenues, and not much on subscription. Aside from commercial advertising, ads include those for government information, awareness raising, holiday greetings, congratulatory messages, and so on. The last two are very important for print media in particular, especially in a country such as Kosovo that celebrates a large number of holidays. Commercial banks, telephone companies, insurance companies, and chain stores are among the biggest commercial advertisers. The government used to be one of the biggest advertisers, until the procurement reform pushed all state solicitations online. There are no government subsidies for private or local media. The only state subsidies go to RTK, which is also allowed to collect revenues from advertisement, an arrangement that private media organizations consider unfair.

#### MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED ENTERPRISES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

##### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets operate as efficient and self-sustaining enterprises.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards.
- > Government subsidies and advertising are distributed fairly, governed by law, and neither subvert editorial independence nor distort the market.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor the product to the needs and interests of the audience.
- > Broadcast ratings, circulation figures, and Internet statistics are reliably and independently produced.



“[NGOs and associations] have also invested time in offering training and workshop opportunities for journalists, as well as advocating on their behalf and on the overall improvement of the media climate in Kosovo. However, most of them remain dependent on international funding,” Luci said.

Media outlets do not consistently use market research to formulate strategic plans or enhance advertising revenues. Although there are market research agencies, private media rarely ask for their services. Not all media outlets accept existing data because of concerns about objectivity. For more than four years, no reliable research has been conducted to produce broadcast ratings, circulation figures, or Internet statistics. The Regulatory Authority of Electronic and Postal Communication, an independent agency established by the state responsible for licensing and supervising providers of telecommunication services, cover the latter to some extent. Despite the lack of reliable rating and circulation figures, certain media outlets often come up with figures claiming they are the market leaders. The panelists did not accept such figures because they are not provided by independent and professional organizations.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.53

Scores for this objective changed little overall from 2012, nearing sustainability but still prompting questions about the long-term implications of foreign financing of the country’s public education and NGO sectors.

Trade and professional associations remain active in supporting media interests, another reason why Objective 5 has scored relatively high in the past. “There are journalism associations and media regulatory bodies that work on behalf of the interest of journalism and its advancement,” Luci said. “Such actors have also invested time in offering training and workshop opportunities for journalists, as well as advocating on their behalf and on the overall improvement of the media climate in Kosovo. However, most of them remain dependent on international funding.” She also suggests that a new system is needed that would make these organizations self-sustainable through membership, which would also increase incentives for journalists

## SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of media owners and managers and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists’ rights and promote quality journalism.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs exist providing substantial practical experience.
- > Short-term training and in-service training institutions and programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of media equipment, newsprint, and printing facilities are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, cable, Internet, mobile) are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Information and communication technology infrastructure sufficiently meets the needs of media and citizens.

to become more active advocates for improvement of media standards.

There are two main journalists’ organizations, the Association of Kosovo Professional Journalists and the Kosovo Journalists Union. Panelist Jahiri, representing the Union, explained its role: “Our mission is to protect the rights of journalists and freedom of expression as well as to advance our profession through trainings and public debates.” This year saw a serious and successful cooperation of the associations in their battle to get Articles 37 and 38 removed from the Penal Code. Nevertheless, panelists say that although they are active, the associations need to be more innovative rather than simply reacting when the rights of journalists are violated.

Print media are also represented by the Print Media Council, while broadcast media are represented by the Association of Independent Electronic Media of Kosovo, which is quite active in lobbying activities that aim to protect the interests of private broadcast media. It deals mostly with the Independent Media Commission, as well as with the Kosovo Assembly, where laws on media and telecommunication are adopted.

With regard to the trade unions, only RTK workers have established trade union that represents the interests of its employed journalists. “I think it would be good if journalists had a single trade union that would negotiate with the media owners,” Gashi said.

There is strong cooperation between the industry and NGOs, especially when violations of media freedom occur. The NGO community is quick to react in such cases.

Journalism degrees are offered both by the public university and private colleges. The quality of programs is not bad, although they lack modern facilities for practical training. A positive initiative is that both institutions have signed agreements with the public media to secure internships for journalism students. Students tend to be more interested in internships at television stations rather than at newspapers, radio stations or with blogs. Kosovo 2.0, one of the largest blogs in the country with more than 200 bloggers, each year accepts six to seven interns, Luci said. The Balkan Investigative Research Network takes around four to seven interns each year. The panelists expressed concern that the number of journalism students is constantly increasing while the number of traditional media outlets is falling.

There are short-term training opportunities for journalists. International organizations continue to offer fellowships and organize training programs or study visits for journalists. For instance, this year Al-Jazeera Balkan organized a training program on citizen journalism. Each year a Kosovo journalist has received one of the Balkan Fellowships for Journalism Excellence, offered by the Balkan Investigative Research Network; one of the 2012 fellows was Arbana Xharra, one of the panelists of this study. Saracini said that larger media outlets organize in-house training programs, adding, "It would be a good learning experience if we could exchange our journalists with larger international mediums, but unfortunately we cannot afford it financially." Gashi said there is a great need to train journalists in specific fields, such as law and the judiciary.

There are no restrictions on importing materials that media or journalists need to produce their work. Further, as noted earlier, the government has removed the VAT for media outlets, which makes equipment purchases more affordable for them.

In terms of channels of media distribution, such as newspaper stands, cable providers, and ISPs, there is no state control. Newspapers are mostly sold through kiosks; door-to-door distribution is not a practice. Cable is easily distributed, especially in urban areas, and the subscription fee is not regarded as too expensive. The same is true of Internet subscriptions.

Internet service providers do not block any sort of content. Almost all local television stations are provided by one of the available cable providers in each community. Overall, the existing information and telecommunication technology (ICT) infrastructure is modern and meets the needs of the media industry in Kosovo.

## List of Panel Participants

**Besim Abazi**, journalist, Voice of America; lecturer of journalism, University of Pristina

**Kreshnik Gashi**, journalist, Balkan Investigative Research Network, Pristina

**Bekim Hasani**, editor, RTK Television, Pristina

**Muhamet Jahiri**, president, Kosovo Journalists' Union, Pristina

**Besa Luci**, editor in chief, Kosovo 2.0 Blog, Pristina

**Predrag Radonjic**, journalist, Radio Kim, Caglavica

**Eugen Saracini**, news editor and marketing director, RTV 21, Pristina

**Arbana Xharra**, editor, *Zeri*, Pristina

**Ardita Zejnullahu**, executive director, Association of Kosovo Independent Electronic Media, Pristina

## Non-Scoring Observer

**Emine Berisha**, IREX, Pristina

## Moderators

**Antigona Berisha-Lucaj**, researcher, Institute for Advanced Studies GAP, Pristina

**Jeton Mehmeti**, policy analyst, Institute for Advanced Studies GAP, Pristina

## Author

**Jeton Mehmeti**, policy analyst, Institute for Advanced Studies GAP, Pristina

*The Kosovo chapter was coordinated and conducted in partnership with the Institute for Advanced Studies GAP. The panel discussion was convened on December 11, 2012.*