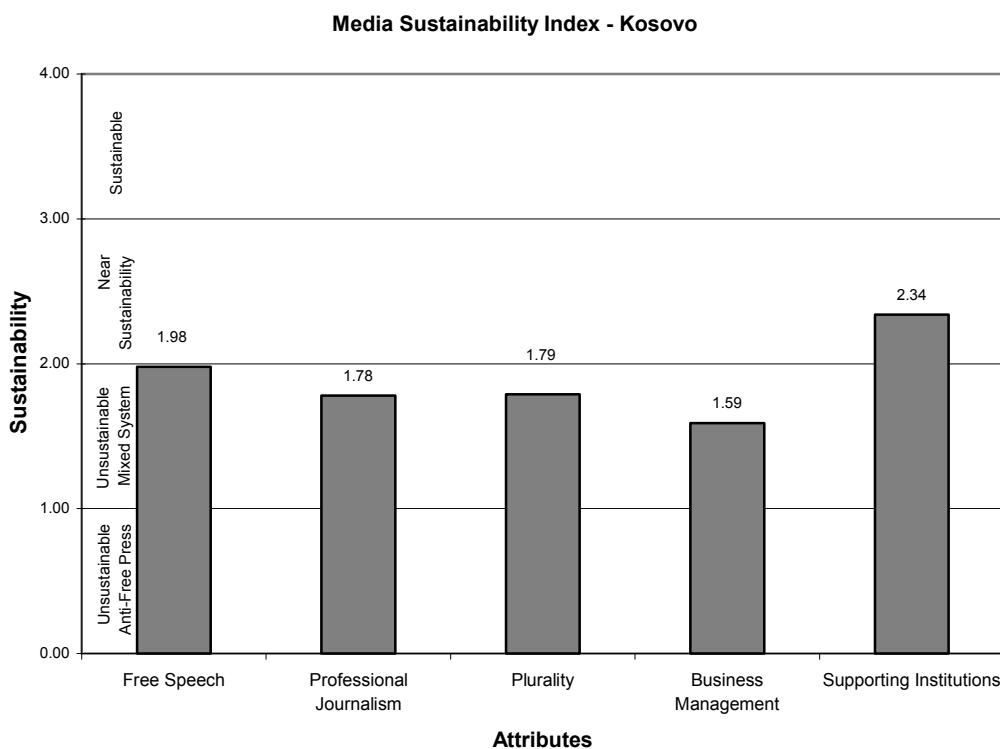


Kosovo

Introduction

Kosovo had little independent media while under direct Serbian control. Therefore, freedom of speech is a highly regarded commodity in Kosovo after years of repression. Throughout fifty years of socialism and ten recent years of more repressive rule under Serbia, Kosovar Albanians in particular knew only state-run media and had limited access to independent sources of information in their own language. There was only one Albanian daily newspaper, *Rilindja* (Revival), which was shut down when the Milosevic regime took over in 1990. For almost a decade afterward most Albanian-language media were banned. *Bujku* (the former *Rilindja*) continued to publish with questionable legality. In 1997 the private daily *Koha Ditore* was launched, giving Kosovo some degree of media pluralism for the first time in its history. Clearly, the citizens of Kosovo and Kosovar journalists entered the current period under the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) protection with little experience of independent media.

The first task after the war in 1999 was to rebuild the media from the ground up. The terrestrial broadcast network controlled by Serbia (Radio Television Pristina or RTP) was bombed during the war and virtually all sites were rendered nonoperational. By mid-2001, there were 93 licenses issued to radio stations province-wide. Television licenses numbered 24. Four national coverage licenses were granted: Radio-Television 21 in Pristina holds radio and television licenses, KohaVision in Pristina holds a television license, Radio-Television Kosova (RTK), the public broadcaster, holds two radio and one television licenses, Radio Dukagjini in Peja holds a radio license. The transmission system for province-wide broadcasters is under construction with support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Government of Japan. Seventy-eight percent population coverage was reached in September 2001.



Scoring System

- 0** = Country does not meet indicator; government or social forces may be actively opposed to its implementation.
1 = Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator; forces may not be actively opposed to its implementation but business environment may not support it and government or profession not fully and actively supporting change.
2 = Country has begun to meet many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge or still dependent on current government or political forces.
3 = Country meets most aspects of indicator and implementation of indicator has occurred over several years and/or change in government, indicating likely sustainability.
4 = Country meets the aspects of the indicator; has remained intact over multiple changes in government, economic fluctuations, changes in public opinion and/or changing social conventions.

The scores for all indicators are totaled and averaged for each objective.

Each of the objectives can receive a score from 0 to 4:

- Above 3: Sustainable and free independent media
 2-3: Independent media approaching sustainability
 1-2: Significant progress remains to be made; society or government not fully supportive
 0-1: Country meets few of indicators and government/society actively opposing changes

UNMIK took control of day-to-day governance and entrusted all electronic media licensing and media regulations to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In addition, OSCE became responsible for transforming RTP, re-named Radio-Television Kosovo (RTK), into a public service broadcaster. To date, licensing seems to be both fair and quite competitive.

Independent electronic media have reached a saturation level, given the number of licenses issued and the number of stations broadcasting. OSCE is trying to be fair and impartial in issuing licenses, but readily admits that there are too many outlets for the province. A wide array of sources has helped independent electronic media, including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the European Broadcasting Union, the United Nations, and the U.S. government. Stations have received help in the form of equipment grants, training, and reimbursements of monthly operating costs. All of this support has created a false sense of sustainability in the years following UNMIK control. Stations are for the most part not operating as profitable businesses; instead, they rely on donor money for support.

2001 and 2002 will see a shakeout of licensed broadcast outlets. Many NGOs and governments will not continue to support independent media. Stations will have to sustain themselves via the commercial market, which currently is not strong enough to support all licenses issued.

Attribute #1: Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information

Indicators
1. Legal/social protections of free speech exist and are enforced
2. Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical
3. Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries
4. Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare
5. State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence
6. Libel is a civil law issue, public officials are held to higher standards, offended party must prove falsity and malice
7. Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists
8. Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists
9. Entry into journalism profession is free and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists

Freedom of speech is valued in Kosovo but long-term protections remain uncertain, and more progress is needed on legal protection of free speech and access to public information. Under current UNMIK control, much of the future of media independence rests with UNMIK and OSCE, and the acceptance by future Kosovar governing structures of the concept of free speech, in theory and practice, remains unknown. OSCE has promulgated regulations and codes of conduct to meet international standards, with the exception of public information. The OSCE's temporary media commissioner oversees the regulatory issues. An Independent Media Commission (IMC) with significant Kosovar representation is being created to handle both licensing and violations of the code of conduct for electronic media.

The "constitutional framework" for Kosovo includes provisions safeguarding freedom of speech and the independence of journalism. The IMC will be an arms-length regulatory agency. How rights will be protected is not yet clear, because Kosovar institutions of government are not fully functioning and current UNMIK regulations do not include a freedom of information law. There have been reports of officials unwilling to provide official documents to journalists from electronic and print media. Panelists have agreed that free speech and access to public information is not up to Western standards in Kosovo. They stressed that the entire media community in Kosovo were against UNMIK's regulations, considering them to be a deterrent to free speech and expression of ideas. It will be up to the IMC to rectify UNMIK's current regulations in this fundamental area.

Attribute #2: Journalism meets professional standards of quality

Indicators
1. Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced
2. Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards
3. Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship
4. Journalists cover key events and issues
5. Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption
6. Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming
7. Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient
8. Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political)

The journalist as a society's "honest broker of information" is a relatively new concept in Kosovo. Many reporters see themselves as employed to promote a particular political party or viewpoint. The reporting of most media is fairly objective, but years of scrutiny by Belgrade has somewhat weakened the impartiality of writers and broadcast journalists. There is also a great fear of violence in the journalism community: organized crime is almost a taboo subject in Kosovar media for this reason. The lack of laws and security discourages journalists from writing about dangerous topics.

Journalists in both electronic and print media are not paid as well as European or Western journalists, though salaries are higher than in any other local businesses. Salary reductions have been taking place in mid-2001 in almost every print or broadcast outlet. Many stations (particularly TV) hire away good journalists from the competition. Shortly after the UN and international agencies came in, media was a privileged profession, as there was a huge demand for journalists: that boosted salaries. Radio and TV stations and newspapers had the money to pay an average monthly salary of \$500 (this average has now dropped to \$300), while other local businesses and state institutions could pay only \$150–\$200 per month.

Despite a great deal of international instruction since 1999, journalists in Kosovo are generally poorly trained. Media facilities are not up to normally accepted standards. The isolation that resulted from 50 years of state control of media meant that Kosovar journalists never really had a chance to understand the standards of quality and professional reporting that Western countries take for granted. The media organizations that have received significant donor support since the war are better equipped, have better paid staff, and for the most part have higher professional and ethical standards. While some stations in the larger cities have fairly good technical equipment, most of the regional stations are still ill equipped.

There is currently one private journalism school in Kosovo. The University of Prishtina lacks journalism-training capacities, although there is a project to establish a graduate program in journalism in the near future. A significant amount of basic journalism training has taken place in Kosovo through international NGOs, which continue to mount programs for journalists in all media. Courses range from very basic skills to investigative journalism and election reportage. The Media Sustainability Index (MSI) panel considered that more time and training are needed to overcome the gap that has been many years in the making. Particularly needed in Kosovo is investigative journalism: there is currently little or no reporting of this kind. Many NGOs plan to concentrate on training in this crucial area.

Attribute #3: Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news

Indicators
1. Plurality of public and private news sources (e.g. print, broadcast, Internet) exist and are affordable
2. Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted
3. State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are non-partisan, and serve the public interest
4. Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media
5. Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs
6. Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates
7. A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources

Kosovo has a wide variety of new media sources available to the population, reflecting a wide range of viewpoints. However, many of the sources are not financially viable and may not survive over the long term. Prior to 1999, there were only two Albanian newspapers (*Bujku* and *Koha Ditore*). The only electronic media were state controlled (RTP). The other extreme now exists, as there are currently 93 licensed radio stations, 24 TV stations, and 17 newspapers (6 dailies and 11 periodicals). In addition, there is the public broadcaster, RTK, operating one television and two radio stations.

Currently, the most popular newspapers are *Bota Sot*, *Koha Ditore*, and *Zeri*. There are also many magazines and weekly newspapers throughout the area, as well as many foreign publications for the international community (if not entirely affordable to Kosovars). On the broadcast side, RTK and Radio 21 are the leading stations. The public-service RTK, operating with a British manager and under OSCE oversight, is considered to be an impartial source of news. Some worry that once it comes under the control of local authorities it may lose some of its independence.

Because of the inchoate nature of the current government structure, and as a result of the international presence in Kosovo, many government and institutional stations also broadcast throughout Kosovo. Many international broadcasters such as Voice of America (VOA), the British Broadcasting Service (BBC), Deutschewelle (DW), and Radio France Internationale (RFI) can be heard province-wide. Kosovo also has three news agencies currently operating: Kosovalive, Kosovapress, and Kosova Information Center. The first province-wide audience ratings will take place this year for all media.

More national coverage of events is provided in Kosovo than local and regional news. There is a lack of true local coverage in the electronic media. Newspapers produce better local coverage than electronic media. In general, the actions of the international community in Kosovo and province-wide political events and issues receive the bulk of media coverage.

Serbian programming is available on some regional radio stations, with most programs consisting of daily news and community affairs. Some of these stations operate in multiple languages while others are Serbian-language stations. There are currently no Serb TV stations in Kosovo. Many Serbs have fled the province, and most of the remainder live in unconnected enclaves and have restricted their movement due to safety concerns. Therefore it is difficult to create viable broadcast and print media serving the Serbian community. Albanian papers, television, and radio provide some information on the life of Serbs in the

area. There are only a few small Serb newspapers, and access to them is limited outside of heavily populated Serb areas.

While media outlets have unrestricted access to public and international information, many of them cannot afford daily access to Internet services. Internet is available in Pristina, but in smaller cities and communities it is not widely available. IPKO (a local Internet provider) is currently working on a scheme to have most of Kosovo connected to the Internet by the end of 2001. For almost two years, all media organizations had free Internet access provided by IPKO. Beginning in January 2001, a charge ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 per month was instituted for any print or broadcast outlet that wanted Internet access. There are several local Internet providers working now in Kosovo.

Three local news agencies (Kosovo Information Center, Kosovapress, and Kosovalive) offer their services through their Web pages free of charge. Only Kosovalive seems reliable. Some newspapers and stations (*Koha Ditore*, RTV 21) have Internet editions, but they are not updated on a daily basis.

Ownership qualifications for electronic media were too liberal in the first round of licensing by OSCE. It is unclear exactly who owns and operates many of the stations in Kosovo. The IMC (when it is in place) will need to invest a much effort to correct this omission. The present conditions make it unclear what direct investment or influence political figures have in media outlets. Consequently, judgments about the propriety of ownership are based on rumor or insider information, the accuracy of which is questionable.

Attribute #4: Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence

Indicators
1. Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses
2. Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources
3. Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market
4. Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets
5. Independent media do not receive government subsidies
6. Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences
7. Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced

Media in Kosovo are not well-managed businesses and most are donor-dependent. The independent media sector is only two years old, with a few exceptions such as *Koha Ditore*. Former journalists manage most media outlets and are consequently learning management skills on the job. Budgeting, sales, advertising, and human resources are all areas for which these former journalists had no preparation. Many media organizations have untrained sales and marketing staff; many others lack dedicated staff for these functions. Donors provide some instruction and assistance in this area but it will take years of training, both on the job and in formal settings, before a pool of competent sales and marketing staff is available.

The major complication in establishing media marketing is the lack of an infrastructure for commercial viability. The economy remains weak and dependent on the international community, much of which does not generate the advertising it normally would. Commercial advertising is now accepted as normal and there is advertising by Kosovar businesses. However, this is not enough to support the stations and newspapers currently operating. Small and medium businesses do not necessarily understand advertising, and stations and papers are not engaged in an educational role on the value of advertising. The lack of advertising agencies complicates the problem.

Some radio stations manage to cover 50–75 percent of their operating costs through advertising, but most media struggle to meet basic operating costs. Only *Bota Sot* and *Koha Ditore* are considered self-sustaining, since they have the biggest circulations and seem to have attracted significant advertising in their publications. Other stations survive through donations. Over the next few years, some of the existing

media should be able to achieve self-sustainability, depending on economic conditions. The infrastructure of Kosovo will have to improve greatly for more businesses to be able to start up and thus provide a marketplace for goods and services. However, with the saturation of the media market, the competition for scarce advertising revenue will force many stations out of business. RTK, the public service broadcaster, currently takes advertising, and limits to its market share are being discussed. Private broadcasters fear that without strict limits, RTK could take a significant portion of the market or drive down prices, since it will also be the beneficiary of a fee levied on citizens' electric bills.

Audience research is in a preliminary stage in Kosovo. The first major media research project will take place in the third quarter of 2001. No local research of note has been produced in Kosovo, and consequently most stations and papers operate with only a rudimentary understanding of their audiences. This not only affects their ability to sell advertising, but also affects their ability to meet their audience's needs. Donors are funding the planned research and it is unclear when local media will have the ability to fund market research themselves.

Attribute #5: Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media

Indicators
1. Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services
2. Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights
3. NGOs support free speech and independent media
4. Quality journalism degree programs exist providing substantial practical experience
5. Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills
6. Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and not restricted
7. Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted

Kosovo does not have a history of independent associations representing journalists' and media owners' interests before the public and government. Free speech NGOs did not formally exist in Albania under Milosevic and journalism education was not possible in formal settings. The Serbian government and private interests tied to the state controlled printing and distribution networks. With the end of the war in 1999 and the advent of UNMIK political control, Kosovar media had to start these institutions from the ground up. However, they also had to concentrate on building their media outlets and the technical infrastructure, and the development of professional associations and NGOs took a back seat to more pressing concerns.

After nearly two years of post-war development, there is progress in the development of professional associations. In general, however, the existing associations operate in an ad hoc and heavily politicized and fractionalized manner. Several donors are encouraging associations to take over the enforcing of professional standards as a way of improving effectiveness. AMPEK, the private broadcasters association, has become more active and has been more vocal in advocating its members' rights before the OSCE and UNMIK. It remains in its beginning stages however and is developing its membership and discussing a more active role.

What is commonly referred to as the "journalists' association" has a board that is in fact composed of media owners and managers. This association was formed with the encouragement of the OSCE so it would have an interlocutor representing the interests of media when developing media regulations. However, the association has been inactive unless prompted by the OSCE or other donors. Donors are again encouraging reform of the association and a focus on journalists issues.

There is currently no university program for journalism or communications in Kosovo. There are plans to start a journalism program at the University of Prishtina in 2002. The MSI panel cited international NGOs such as the BBC and IREX as good trainers in the interim but stressed that training needs to be transferred to and controlled by Kosovar institutions.

While there are three network TV stations and four network radio stations covering Kosova, there is still inadequate distribution of news sources for the electronic media. Province-wide stations reach only 78 percent of the population through KTTN. Donors have spent millions of dollars accomplishing this level of coverage but more funding for expansion seems unlikely at this point. Internet usage is not readily available throughout Kosovo although there are plans by one provider, IPKO, to expand throughout the country. However, cost will also inhibit the rapid expansion of Internet usage. Without a Kosovar government, private printing and distribution networks are the only operators. However, they are not necessarily efficient or modern. Individual papers own printing presses although they do print other papers as well.

List of panel participants

1. Cynthia Efird, Director of Media Regulation, OSCE
2. Argjentina Grazhdani, Office of Democracy, USAID
3. Vjollca Krasniqi, Media Department, Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID)
4. Avni Spahiu, Senior Journalist, RIINVEST Institute
5. Isuf Berisha, Director of KFOS (SOROS Foundation)
6. Ibrahim Gashi, IREX/Kosovo

Panel moderator

Astrit Salihu, Director of Gani Bobi Institute for Media Monitoring