

KOSOVO



**MEDIA
SUSTAINABILITY
INDEX**

2019

Tracking Development
of Sustainable
Independent Media
Around the World



KOSOVO

AT A GLANCE

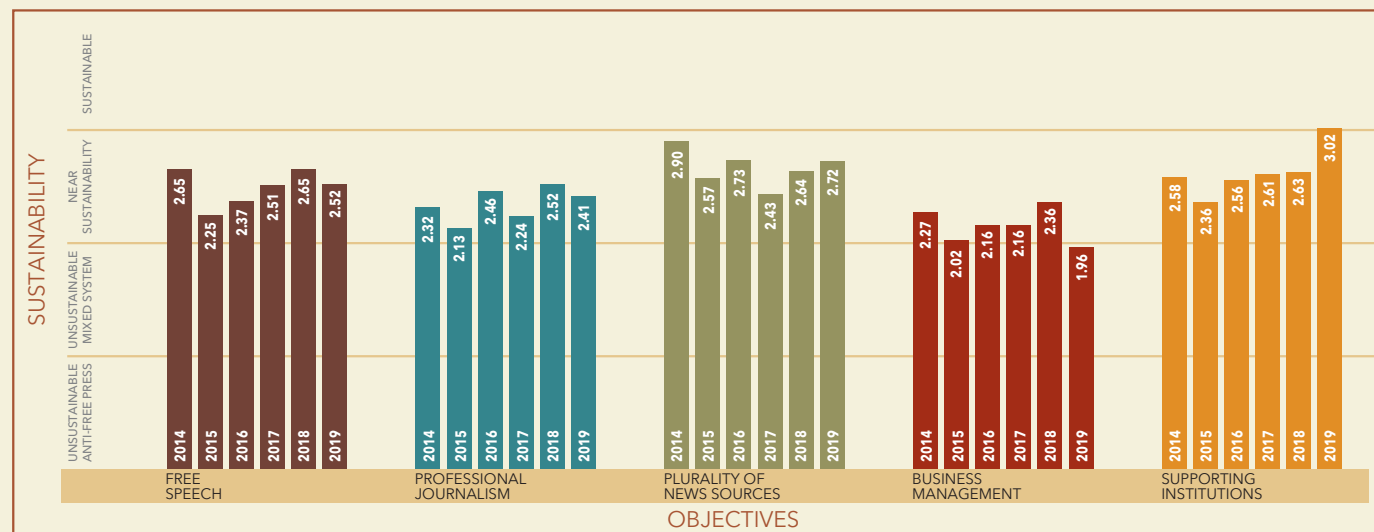
GENERAL

- **Population:** 1,907,592 (*CIA World Factbook*, July 2018)
- **Capital city:** Pristina
- **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Albanians 92.9%, Bosniaks 1.6%, Serbs 1.5%, Turk 1.1%, Ashkali 0.9%, Egyptian 0.7%, Gorani 0.6%, Romani 0.5%, other/unspecified 0.2% (*CIA World Factbook*, 2011)
- **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 95.6%, Roman Catholic 2.2%, Orthodox 1.5%, other 0.07%, none 0.07%, unspecified 0.6% (*CIA World Factbook*, 2011)
- **Languages (% of population):** Albanian (official) 94.5%, Bosnian 1.7%, Serbian (official) 1.6%, Turkish 1.1%, other 0.9% (includes Romani), unspecified 0.1% (*CIA World Factbook*, 2011)
- **GNI (2017—Atlas):** \$7.15 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2017)
- **GNI per capita (2016—PPP):** \$11,020 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2017)
- **Literacy rate:** N/A
- **President or top authority:** President Hashim Thaçi (since April 7, 2016)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- **Number of active media outlets:** Print: 5 daily newspapers, radio stations: 82, television stations: 20 (Independent Media Commission, 2015)
- **Newspaper circulation statistics:** *Koha Ditore* is the leading newspaper, followed by *Kosova Sot* (Index Kosova, December 2015)
- **News agencies:** Kosovo Live, Kosovo Press, Economy Online
- **Broadcast ratings:** RTK (40%), KTV (37%), RTV21 (36%), Klan Kosova (18%), Radio Dukagjini (4.2%), Radio Blue Sky (2.1%), Radio Kosova (2%), Radio 21 (1.9%) (Index Kosova, December 2015)
- **Internet usage:** 88% of households have Internet access (Index Kosova, December 2015)
- **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** There is no available data.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: KOSOVO



SCORE KEY

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 <https://www.irex.org/msi>



Kosovo's overall score for the MSI dropped slightly this year, in comparison to its overall score of 2.56 in the previous year's study. Despite this decline, Kosovo remains in the "near sustainability" classification.

The 2019 chapter for Kosovo shows drops in the scores for the freedom of speech, professional journalism, and business management objectives, and moderate increases in plurality of news and supporting institutions.

Panelists noted that while Kosovo enjoys good diversity in media, the steady shift away from traditional print media to the online environment has seen ethical standards diminish.

In February 2018, Kosovo celebrated its first decade as an independent state. Ten years earlier, members of Kosovo's Parliament signed the declaration of independence from Serbia. Major countries in the European Union (EU)--such as Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy-- as well as the United States, were among the first nations to recognize Kosovo as an independent state. However, Kosovo has yet to become a member of the United Nations (UN), as it is still not recognized by two-thirds of UN member states, including Russia and China. In November 2018, Interpol rejected Kosovo's application for membership, prompting the government of Kosovo to blame Serbia for a "wild campaign" against Kosovo's membership. In return, the Kosovo government decided that all goods imported from Serbia will be subject to 100 percent tax. This decision caused a further deterioration in the relations between the two countries.

International political actors, such as the United States and EU, have called on the two countries to resume their political dialogue and find a long-term solution. Dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo has been ongoing since 2011 under the auspices of the EU, the ultimate goal of which is to normalize relations between the two countries. However, thus far the talks have shown only modest results. As such, a deadline has been set to end the dialogue and reach a legally binding agreement between Serbia and Kosovo in the first half of 2019. Kosovo's president, Hashim

Thaçi, proposed redefining state borders as a permanent solution to bring peace and stability between the two countries. Whether that means an exchange of territories and inhabitants is unknown; the president's office has failed to respond to such questions and to all inquiries from the media about the president's plan.

As a result of these still-unresolved tensions between Kosovo and Serbia and the looming deadline to end talks between the two countries, media coverage of the EU-supported dialogue was dominant in Kosovo throughout 2018 and was at the expense of coverage of other important issues such as sociopolitical events, the economy, minority and marginalized groups, and human rights. While 2018 witnessed a number of threats against journalists and media professionals, the year also saw the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate crimes against journalists, which was a culmination of journalists' associations' efforts to prompt the government to take action to protect journalists. Another major achievement in 2018 was the adoption of the law on whistleblowing, which is good in content but a challenge in implementation. Overall, access to public information remains difficult despite the existence of a law that guarantees it. Other challenges in the media sector relate to the lack of transparency in media ownership, failure to fully adhere to professional standards in reporting, and scarcity of financial resources.

**OBJECTIVE 1:
FREEDOM OF
SPEECH**

2.52

The Kosovo Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and there are a number of laws that regulate and defend this right. Laws are generally consistent with EU and other internationally accepted standards for free speech protection. A special law regulates the protection of journalists' sources, but panelists feel that the law is not fully implemented. Panelists cited a few cases when a source of information became public, thus discouraging other whistleblowers from coming forward with information. In one case, a Kosovo police officer was fired after he was under suspicion of having leaked information about a criminal act to the media involving the son of a high-ranking official.

At the end of 2018, the Kosovo Parliament adopted the Law on the Protection of Whistle-Blowers. This law establishes rules on whistle-blowing, including procedures, rights and protections, and the obligations of public institutions and private entities regarding whistle-blowing. Panelists consider the law advanced, but they fear judicial inefficiency will serve as an obstacle to its implementation. Considering the high levels of corruption and nepotism, as well as the fact that the public sector and government remain the biggest employers in the country, ensuring the safety and protection of whistle-blowers remains a challenging task. Last year, a police officer was dismissed under suspicions of leaking information about the involvement of the son of the director of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency in a criminal act. Also, during 2018, there was a dangerous attempt by the Kosovo Assembly to adopt a media law, which, according to panelists,

would restrict the freedom of media. It is still unclear what the content of such law would have been since the discussion was only at the conceptual level and no draft on media law was ever presented. Nevertheless, panelists believe that no specific law on media is necessary.

The licensing of television, radio, and cable providers is managed by the broadcast media regulator, Independent Media Commission (IMC). As the terrestrial broadcast spectrum is fully allocated, currently the IMC is only licensing non-frequency content providers which broadcast through cable networks. This licensing process is very simple, with minimal criteria. Panelists see this as a problem because it has led to a rapid increase in the number of TV channels, a large number of which lack proper infrastructure, face insufficient human resources, and produce poor media content. The IMC has failed to make the switchover from analog to digital broadcasting, despite an existing deadline that passed in 2015. A board of directors, whose members are appointed by the Kosovo Assembly, manages IMC. Panelists believe the selection process is based on party preferences rather than merit. Printed media and Internet-based media outlets, on the other hand, are not subject to a licensing process but must register with the relevant authorities.

Market entry for the media is the same as for all other businesses. They are not subject to any special tax, except certain fees that are required for electronic media, such as the license fee collected by the IMC, a frequency fee collected by the Regulatory Authority of Electronic and Postal Communications, and the transmitter maintenance fee collected by the Kosova Terrestrial Telecommunications Network. Although there is a value-added tax (VAT) exemption for media, there are some ambiguities in the law such as the

procedures for claiming VAT reimbursement for equipment bought from local vendors rather than directly imported. Media organizations are exempt from VAT in the import of equipment, but not purchases in the domestic market.

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 of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- ▶ Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- ▶ Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- ▶ State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- ▶ 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 accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- ▶ Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- ▶ Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

Crimes against media professionals occur primarily in the form of threats and physical assaults. In 2018, Kosovo saw a considerable number of crimes against journalists and media professionals; investigative journalists, in particular, are more prone to threats. These crimes are mostly condemned

by journalists' associations, which have repeatedly asked for the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate the threats and crimes against journalists exclusively. In 2018, a prosecutor was finally appointed. In addition, the Kosovo office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe organized a campaign that aimed to raise awareness about the safety of journalists in Kosovo. Panelists partly blame the political elites for the increasing hostility toward media. Similar to global trends, Kosovo has seen decreases in public trust and in the credibility of journalists, and political elites are increasingly using rhetoric to delegitimize the media. They attempt to place media within specific political camps or try to characterize credible and professional media as producers of "fake news." Kosovo's president has used the term "fake news" on more than one occasion in an attempt to refute reports about him and his statements. In a TV debate on the show Rubikon, the president even repeatedly called the reporter a liar. Nevertheless, libel and similar acts of defamation are not criminal offenses in Kosovo, and civil liability for smears and insults are regulated by a special law in which the burden of proof is on the defendant.

In 2018, Kosovo saw a considerable number of crimes against journalists and media professionals; investigative journalists, in particular, are more prone to threats.

While the law protects the editorial independence of the public broadcaster, the reality is much different. Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK), as the only public broadcaster, continues to be subject to political pressure, particularly by the ruling parties. The key problem in this regard is the failure to find a sustainable way to finance the public broadcaster,

as RTK is still financed by the state budget, jeopardizing its editorial and institutional independence. In 2018, the Kosovo Parliament approved a new draft law on RTK, which includes a mixed-financing mechanism, mainly from subscriptions--€2.50 [\$2.80] per household to be collected through electricity bills and a small percentage (0.4 percent) of the state budget. However, the new bill did not ultimately pass, and it is expected to return to Parliament in 2019.

At the end of 2018, the Kosovo government passed a new regulation on the government public communication service. The main goal of the regulation is to ensure that the work of government institutions is open to the public. However, despite legal protections, access to information remains a worrisome issue. Certain influential media with nationwide coverage are more easily granted access to information and documents. For smaller media, the same access, or even interviews with public officials, usually takes longer and requires more insistence. Overall, journalists struggle to obtain official information on important topics, especially on the content of public contracts. Another issue that must be addressed is the manner in which journalists are credentialed to access government offices and Parliament. Media outlets are required to send the names of the journalists (generally a maximum of two, depending on the size of the media) at the beginning of the year. However, those names cannot be replaced within the course of that year, so if a journalist changes jobs or is otherwise unavailable, then the outlet no longer has access to that particular institution.

Media outlets' access to and use of local and international news and news sources are not restricted by law. Outlets reprint and retransmit international news subject to copyright laws. Lastly, entry into the journalism profession is free, and the

government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

2.41

With a shift from print to online media, ethical standards have largely deteriorated. Journalists do not always check and verify the information, and often, especially among online media, outlets simply copy one another. There is a widespread belief that the mere purpose of online journalism is to publish content in so-called real time. Such an approach has significantly damaged professional standards and has led to single-sourced and unverified content being published continuously. Online media platforms, as such, are increasingly becoming avenues where single statements and quotes by political and public officials are published as the "latest news" or "latest developments."

Panelists also remarked that online journalism has the tendency to refer to all online media as "online portals." This phrase refers to the technicality of the platform, not the form or genre of journalism. As such, it makes it more difficult to distinguish between one source and another, because using the catch-all term "online portal" does not acknowledge the diversity of the format, such as online newspapers, online news agencies, or online magazines. Still, the growth of the Internet has paved the way for the increase of much smaller, more independent, and professional media outlets in recent years. These outlets have more journalists covering specific beats in a more in-depth manner.

Journalists have repeatedly stressed that their

community continues to work in poor working conditions and for low wages. A lack of contracts remains a problem for journalists and creates an atmosphere of professional insecurity. In 2018, a number of journalists and cameramen publicly denounced the TV channel Tribuna for failing to pay several months of wages, taxes, and pension contributions.

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.
- ▶ 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 exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Online media continue to flood the media scene, although the total number of them remains unknown. Ownership transparency is still low. Many people have no information on who the owners of outlets are or who works in editorial offices. However, because of direct funding from the state, RTK is influenced by policy interventions. RTK's independent trade union has reacted several times,

criticizing RTK's leaders for mismanagement of finances and overstaffing through unfair competition and nepotism. Nonprofit media organizations continue to embrace a higher level of editorial independence, even though only a small number of total media outlets are nonprofit outlets. With more financial sustainability, these media organizations have greater freedom to report without fear of any political or economic revenge. One such example is Kallxo.com, an online media outlet that has become a member of the International Fact-Checking Network.

Written ethics codes exist, and most media have their own internal written ethical codes. Also, if they are members of the Kosovo Press Council, which the majority of mainstream outlets are, both print and online media are required to abide by the council's code of conduct automatically. Broadcast media are also required to abide by the code of ethics imposed by the IMC, as well as their own internal codes.

Self-censorship remains common. A large number of media organizations have ties to political or business entities, and their journalists and editors are expected to respect such relationships, with the implication that certain topics are off-limits. Journalists have stated that editors and owners tend to influence their work if the article deals with sensitive issues, including political or economic topics. Reporters generally know in advance what they are "allowed" to report.

Most journalists cover events or key issues. Reporting on some events can result in negative consequences for journalists or editors—a problem that tends to affect public media more than private. Whether a journalist is prohibited from covering an event generally relates to the editorial policies of the outlet and the interests, often political or economic, that affect the outlet. Events that are not covered

by mainstream media are usually covered by blogs, citizen journalists, or on social media.

Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are not high enough to discourage self-censorship and retain qualified personnel within the media profession, especially within private and local media. Many media organizations are composed of young journalists who have little experience and are paid poorly. There is a striking salary difference between employees of public and private media, with salaries in the public media considerably higher compared to private organizations.

Still, the growth of the Internet has paved the way for the increase of much smaller, more independent, and professional media outlets in recent years. These outlets have more journalists covering specific beats in a more in-depth manner.

Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming. Facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient, and quality niche reporting and programming exist, including investigative, economic/business, and local and political reporting. Some journalists specialize in certain areas, and there are some distinguished journalists who report on specific issues, especially the rule of law, economic developments, and health care.

**OBJECTIVE 3:
PLURALITY
OF NEWS**

2.72

Overall, Kosovo possesses good media diversity, as there are many outlets in various media formats, such as print, broadcast, and online media. The variety of news sources allows people to check one against the other. However, the plurality in number does not necessarily guarantee a plurality of perspectives within the media. The mainstream media is highly influenced by and oriented toward political elites rather than focusing on policies and issues. In 2018, coverage of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue has dominated, as opposed to issues regarding the sociopolitical and economic well-being of citizens. Coverage of human rights issues and minority and marginalized groups is even weaker. There is, however, an increasing interest in media coverage of more issues pertaining to gender equality and how women are affected by discrimination in political, economic, and social spheres, although editorial offices within newsrooms often lack an understanding of these institutional and social barriers and their effect at the micro level. This lack of knowledge about lived experiences also applies to reporting on ethnic communities. For example, the Kosovo-Serb community is mainly covered through the prism of Kosovo-Serbia relations, while reporting on the Roma community is through the lens of poverty. Other non-majority populations, such as the Turkish and Bosniak communities, are either completely absent or covered only when some extraordinary issue is being voted on in Parliament.

Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted by law, economics, or other means.

People can choose to use or access any media or platform without impediment. The government does not restrict the use of media or websites, except in cases where the court or security mechanisms report that a web page or other platform is at risk of being used for propaganda, such as encouraging people to join terrorist groups. Since public media are funded by the state budget, journalists and editors working in there feel they must serve the ruling parties' interests, as opposed to the public good, based on political pressures and financial dependence. Most of the reporting in public media is spent on government activities.

With regard to the transparency of media ownership, the Press Council has introduced some changes in its governing documents to attempt to ensure that citizens of Kosovo have information on who owns media outlets in the country.

There are several independent news agencies that gather and distribute news for media outlets, but there are still no news agencies that report in Serbian. Because of subscription fees, however, not all media organizations can afford to buy these services. Some media also have access to international news agencies, including Reuters, the Associated Press, and Agence France-Presse.

Most private media produce their own news, as do local and minority media, which specialize in covering events around their own communities. With regard to the transparency of media ownership, the Press Council has introduced some changes in its governing documents to attempt to ensure that citizens of Kosovo have information on who owns media outlets in the country. The council made it

obligatory for members, which is limited to print and online outlets, to have an Impressum published in their outlets, which contains information about the outlet, including its owners, editorial structure, and staff details. Moreover, all prospective members need to have such information published to be considered for membership in the council. These changes were introduced in 2017.

A wide range of social interests is reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources. The media also provide news coverage and information about local, national, and international issues.

Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.
PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS

- ▶ A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- ▶ Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- ▶ Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- ▶ Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- ▶ State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- ▶ A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.
- ▶ Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- ▶ Broadcast ratings, circulation figures, and Internet statistics are reliable.

**OBJECTIVE 4:
BUSINESS
MANAGEMENT**

1.96

Overall, the financial situation and business sustainability of the media has not improved from past years. Public media rely entirely on the state budget, while the private media rely primarily on advertisements or subscription fees, such as with cable providers. There are several media that operate as nongovernmental organizations and depend mainly on grants from donors. Kosovo has seen an increase in donor support for independent media and journalism in recent years, largely as a response to the need for increased media literacy, but also to combat the deluge of fake news and fake media outlets.

The European Union in particular has increased its funding for Kosovo media development. Donors also give money to help build the online skills and capacities of the younger generation of journalists in hopes of countering fake news and increasing issue-based reporting. In a significant change, private media are also now able to apply for donor funding, another effort to widely increase the capacities, skills, and infrastructure of the mainstream. These efforts aim to diversify income and means of content production.

Kosovo Serb private media outlets are generally small, are mostly established as NGOs, and have a maximum of 15 people. Few of them have business plans for short- and medium-terms. Their biggest problems are sustainability and lack of educated journalists and technicians, said the panelist. He also added that marketing for Kosovo Serb media outlets is almost non-existent. According to him, this is due to weak local economy and lack of will from Albanian businesses to take part in Serbian-speaking

media marketing programs. As a result, Kosovo Serb media are almost fully dependable on international donor support.

The government has no subsidies for the community media. The only exception is RTK 2, which is a public television in Serbian language with guaranteed funding from the Kosovo state budget.

Kosovo continues to suffer from a lack of market research, which would help identify audience trends and patterns. Moreover, a lack of industry research leads to individual media being able to either manipulate or exaggerate their own analytics. There is no systematic and credible independent market research; the absence of this prevents media outlets from using such data to better position themselves in the market. However, individual media outlets do conduct market research for internal use and to help attract advertising companies. Relevant Internet statistics can also be easily checked thanks to Google analytics.

There is no systematic and credible independent market research; the absence of this prevents media outlets from using such data to better position themselves in the market.

While there are advertising agencies that media outlets can rely on, many outlets need to engage professionals or companies with knowledge of online and social media marketing tools, particularly those professionals and companies that also understand the importance of maintaining high-quality production. The quality of commercial spots has improved, and all commercial spots must comply with the code of ethics established by the IMC. International companies operating in

Kosovo, such as banks and insurance companies, tend to produce better ads in comparison to local companies.

Business plans are mainly done by the public broadcaster RTK, while private media are not legally required to have them. This is also true for marketing. While private media is not generally required to publicize marketing information, public media is required to make audit reports publicly available.

Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence.
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS

- ▶ Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- ▶ 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 at commercial outlets.
- ▶ Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- ▶ Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- ▶ Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

**OBJECTIVE 5:
SUPPORTING
INSTITUTIONS**

3.02

The Association of Kosovo Independent Electronic Media, which works to protect the interests of most broadcast media, represents private media in the country. Other professional journalist associations also exist and strive to protect journalists' rights and promote quality journalism, both in the Albanian and Serbian communities. The Association of Kosovo Journalists (AGK) is the predominant journalism organization in the country and focuses on monitoring instances of attacks against journalists and condemning such acts. The group often organizes protests and demonstrations to demand a safer environment for journalists, conducts trainings for journalists, and produces research about the country's media environment. In 2018, the AGK elected a new leader in a transparent and competitive process.

Another major organization is the Press Council of Kosovo, whose mission is to ensure that its members (print and online media) uphold ethical standards. Its original intent was to serve print media, but now 90 percent of its members are online outlets. As such, the council is currently reviewing its statute and rules of procedure, and working to tackle emerging issues within online media, such as correction guidelines, the right to complain, photo copyrights, and video content.

Still, workers' rights are not always guaranteed, and in 2018 many of the issues—including a lack of contracts, lack of respect for existing contracts, and other violations—entered the public consciousness, partly because of research from the Association of Journalists. There is an increase in the number of journalists willing to unite around their cause and

speak up, as was the case with TV channel Tribuna.

Both public and private universities offer journalism degree programs, and there appeared to be an increase in the number of graduates entering the industry in the past couple of years. This is also linked to the continuously growing number of online media outlets in need of journalists. However, journalism departments at the University of Pristina continue to lack the technical infrastructure to prepare students with practical, professional skills. In 2018, Kosovo received a grant from the US Embassy¹ to help support local universities through the establishment of the Media Innovation Lab. Meanwhile, private colleges are better equipped technologically.

In recent years, there has been an increase in more innovative and creative programs and workshops in journalism, usually focusing on specific issues, field-based training, or ethics-based approaches. There is, however, a lack of training in the use of online and digital tools.

There are short-term training and in-service training institutions also offered by local media such as BIRN, Kosovo 2.0, or local civil society organizations. In recent years, there has been an increase in more innovative and creative programs and workshops in journalism, usually focusing on specific issues, field-based training, or ethics-based approaches. There is, however, a lack of training in the use of online and digital tools.

Sources of media equipment, newsprint, and printing facilities, as well as channels of media

distribution (e.g., kiosks, transmitters, cable, Internet), are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted. There is no government pressure to control or monopolize media distribution, just as there is no government restriction on importing and purchasing materials that the media and journalists need to do their work. The only constraint is financial. Information and communication technology infrastructures (ICT) sufficiently meet the needs of both the media and citizens. Despite relatively low budgets, most media organizations have embraced the digital revolution. Many outlets provide live coverage of events and live streaming on their YouTube channels. Overall, the ICT infrastructure in the country meets the needs of the media industry.

Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.
SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- ▶ Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- ▶ Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- ▶ Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- ▶ Sources of newsprint NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- ▶ Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- ▶ Printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- ▶ Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- ▶ Information and communication technology infrastructure sufficiently meets the needs of media and citizens.

¹ U.S. Embassy in Kosovo, "University Support Grants Program." <https://xk.usembassy.gov/universitysupport/>

List of Panel Participants

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