



Kosovo Women's Network

Serving, Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls

8 December 2015

Dear Member of Parliament,

As citizens of Kosovo and as taxpayers who have the right to participate in the democratic process of determining the budget of Kosovo, we are writing to express our concerns with regard to the current draft Budget for 2016. We do not feel that it adequately reflects the primary needs of Kosovars. More specifically, we request that the following changes be made to the Budget of Kosovo for 2016. Further details and explanation follow. All recommendations derive from recent research by the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), available upon our website or by request.

Summary of Recommendations for 2016 Budget		
Decrease Budget lines	Expense Category	Amount
Parliament	Wages and salaries	- €2,023,547
All ministries: per diems for officials	Wages and salaries / goods and services ¹	- ~€6,000,000
Decision 02/59 on salaries	Wages and salaries	?
Increase Budget Lines		
MEST Pre-school Education investments in pre-schools	Capital expenditures	+ €5,500,000
MEST Pre-school Education teachers	Wages and salaries	+ €43,200
UoP Student Housing	Capital expenditures	+ €100,000
MLSW Social Services for gender-based violence shelters	Subsidies and transfers	+ €90,000
MLSW Pensions for survivors of sexual violence	Subsidies and transfers	+€ 1,800,000
MLSW Pensions for caretakers of invalids	Subsidies and transfers	+ €72,240

Decrease expenditures on salaries of parliamentarians: The total budget proposed for parliamentarians in 2016 is €4,047,093, divided by 12 months, is on average €2,810 per parliamentarian per month once all salaries and wages are considered. According to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the average salary in Kosovo is €360 per month. We do not think that a parliament that receives nearly **eight times** the salary of the average Kosovar can adequately represent the interests of Kosovar citizens. Further, considering the impasse that has existed within the parliament for several months in 2015, we do not feel that parliamentarians have earned such a high salary as they have not been able to put aside their disagreements in instances where real needs faced by Kosovars in their day-to-day lives were at stake. We blame both the position and opposition for failing to reach a middle ground on issues that affect the everyday lives of Kosovars. We therefore do not feel that parliamentarians are earning or deserve such high salaries. We call for a decrease in this budget line by **half**, totalling €2,023,547, so that the remaining resources can be used for the wellbeing of all Kosovars as proposed below. This would still allow parliamentarians to earn, on average, **four times** Kosovo's average salary. This would save €2,023,547 for other purposes described below.

Impose a temporary moratorium on per diems for travel outside the country and decrease expenditures on per diems: According to FOL, more than €3,305,026 was spent on per diems in Kosovo in 2014 alone. Further, more than half of Kosovo's institutions refused to be transparent with this information; it can be roughly estimated that twice as much may have been spent. Our experience conducting research with diverse institutions has found that several key officials are almost *always* on study visits and in working groups outside the country. If they are always away, how do they perform their responsibilities at home? Second, organizing trips abroad takes Kosovo's very limited resources

¹ Confusingly, KWN has evidence that funds for per diems are taken from both of these expense categories.

outside the country, rather than reinvesting these precious resources inside Kosovo. Third, we believe that the amount spent on per diems for these trips could be spent in better ways that would benefit Kosovars. While we cannot estimate how much money would be saved due to a lack of transparency in current expenditures, we can estimate it would be up to €6 million. We further request better accountability by all government institutions regarding how per diems are spent and by whom, including as part of their obligation for gender responsive budgeting.

Withdraw Decision 02/59 on salaries of Deputy Prime-Ministers, Ministers, deputy ministers, and the director of the Kosovo Agency of Intelligence, approved in 17.11.2015. According to this decision deputy prime ministers, ministers, and the director of the Kosovo Agency of Intelligence (KAI) will continue receiving 70% of their salaries from the government of Kosovo for one year after their mandate ends. Deputy ministers will receive this for six months after their mandate ends. Considering the large number of ministers (22) and deputy-ministers (27+) that Kosovo has,² KWN considers this money would be better spent on solutions to increase employment (see below) than on government officials who likely will face few challenges in securing employment after office.

Increase budget of pre-school education division in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) to build more preschools. In 2014, 41.6% of women were unemployed, and women's inactivity rate was 78.6%. In 2015, 24.7% of women who were not working (and 3.7% of men) said that the main reason they did not work was because they had responsibilities at home including caretaking (KWN national household survey). Care work is a major issue preventing women from entering the workforce. Currently, Kosovo does not have enough public and affordable preschools or day care centres, falling way short on EU targets for childcare and early education (outlined in the Barcelona Objectives). Investing in childcare and preschools can provide childcare that enables more women in particular to work, as well as create jobs for women and men. The current budget allocated to "capital expenditures in pre-university education" for 2016 is €9,470,000, including a government grant of €8,570,000. According to MEST officials building a new preschool with a "typical project" model, including inventory, costs €550,000. Investing in 10 additional preschools with an average of 12 teachers per school would create 120 new jobs, contributing to government efforts to decrease unemployment. Based on the average salary, it also would require an €43,200 increase to the salaries and wages category. This would contribute to Kosovo meeting EU targets for preschool education and enhance the quality of education for children, crucial for Kosovo's future development.

Increase budget allocation for Students Centre. The students' centre currently has budgeted €600,000 for capital expenditures. Even though the university built a new dorm in 2015, it still has space for only approximately 44.5% of all applicants for housing. Women comprise the majority of students benefiting from housing (60.3%). They likely rely more on such housing than young men as it offers affordability and security. Increasing the occupancy could enable more young women and men to attend university, particularly persons from outside Prishtina who may not be able to afford living and/or transport costs otherwise. Improving access to higher education can contribute to improving the capacities of Kosovo's future labour force and decreasing unemployment in the long-term. Building an extra dormitory would cost €100,000 in capital expenditures.

Increase the budget of MLSW Social Services to fund three more shelters for boys/men, LGBTI persons, and citizens living in northern Kosovo, respectively. Starting April 2015, the amount paid to each shelter per person housed is €208.33 monthly, totalling a maximum of €30,000 per year, per shelter for persons suffering gender-based violence. Currently, the MLSW Social Services budget line (subsidies and transfers) has planned €4,500,000 for 2016. KWN proposes to increase this sum by €90,000 in order to fund three more shelters that would serve persons that KWN research has shown are under-served by present shelters, including boys/men suffering domestic violence; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex persons (LGBTI); and a shelter in northern Kosovo via contracts.

Set aside a budget for survivors of sexual violence. Activists have estimated that this will cost approximately €1,800,000 in 2016, in accordance with the new Law, for 500 survivors of sexual violence to receive €300 per month. This should be carefully monitored for future budget planning.

² Only 27 names of deputy ministers are public on ministerial websites, but KWN knows of at least 10 more whose names are not on websites.

Increase the budget for persons caring for civilian invalids injured during the war in Kosovo. The pension for caretakers of war invalids is **4.5 times higher** than the pension for caretakers of civilian invalids. Yet, the work performed is similar. Considering EU principles of equal pay for equal work, this is discriminatory against caretakers of civilians, who tend to be women from rural areas. The MLSW pension in the subsidies and transfers economic category is foreseen to be €38,000,000 in 2016 and should be increased by €72,240 to address this current inequality.

In general, we ask that in the future you to launch an official inquiry into Kosovo's significantly unmet demands for care work in service of the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities. Investing in the care sector in Kosovo would create thousands of new jobs, decrease unemployment, and enable more women in particular to enter the workforce.

We would happily provide you with further evidence in support of our recommendations should you require it.

Sincerely,



Igballe Rogova
Executive Director
Kosovo Women's Network