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## BRIEF COMMENTARY

# A GENDER READING OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S KOSOVO 2024 REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

Annually, the European Commission (EC) presents its assessment of Kosovo's progress towards joining the European Union (EU) in a report (hereafter, "the Report"). Ideally, in accordance with EU commitments, all chapters of the Report should be gender mainstreamed. This Commentary discusses the EC's Kosovo 2024 Report from a gender perspective,<sup>1</sup> examining its attention to diverse women, men, girls, boys, and gender equality; and the extent to which recommendations provided by women's rights civil society organisations (WCSOs) were included.<sup>2</sup> It observes where gender was mainstreamed in the report and recommends how the EC could have better mainstreamed gender with regard to various chapters and sections.

## KEY FINDINGS

- The 2024 Report **mainstreamed gender in one chapter** (3%), partially in nine (24%), and not at all in 27 chapters (73%).<sup>3</sup> Generally, the Report mentions women, men, boys, girls, and gender significantly less than in prior years, totalling 84 times, compared to 150 in 2023 and 120 in 2022. Perhaps the EC's new, shorter Report format affected the quality and quantity of gender analysis; however, in several sections, one to three words could have been added, making the Report more gender responsive while limiting its length.
- Five of 114 recommendations (4%) relate directly to furthering gender equality.** Regarding these, the EC tended to state that recommendations from last year were partially implemented and remain largely valid. Gender-equality relevant recommendations included:
  - For the **judiciary** to "ensure solid criminal investigations, improve the quality of indictments and ensure effective criminal procedures, including cases of gender-based violence".
  - Under **fundamental rights**, "to strengthen implementation of the Law on gender equality and the Strategy on gender-based violence; appoint a new head of the Agency for Gender Equality; and enhance gender mainstreaming of legislation, regulations and policies".
  - In the **fight against organized crime**, to "strengthen efforts to prevent and combat migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings" though the fact that women and girls tend to comprise the majority of persons trafficked was not mentioned.
  - Under **social policy and employment**, to "adopt the Law on employment and amendments to the Law on labour to align its legal framework with the recent EU *acquis*, notably in relation to non-discrimination in employment and parental leave", though this could have more explicitly referenced

Term	2022	2023	2024
Women	57	57	29
Men	3	8	2
Girl	4	5	5
Boy	0	0	0
Female	12	18	6
Male	6	13	6
Gender	38	49	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>84</b>

<sup>1</sup> EC, [Kosovo 2024 Report](#). This year the EC changed the Report's format slightly

<sup>2</sup> This Commentary was compiled by the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), Kosovar Gender Studies Centre, and Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights, who also provided input for this year's Report in April 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Please see KWN's [Commentary: A Gender Reading of the European Commission's Kosovo 2024 Report](#).

maternity, paternity, and carers' leave as well. Other recommendations in this section relate to women's rights and gender equality, but this is not explicitly stated in the recommendations.

- 5) Under **science and research**, to “devise and implement a gender strategy for research at national level, as well as for full integration and promotion of women and girls in research and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics”.

Opportunities existed for additional recommendations to refer to gender equality (see the next section).

- The Report did not include **sufficient sex-disaggregated data** and had an **inadequate intersectional approach**. Related to rural inhabitants, children, minorities (particularly Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians), persons with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans+, queer, intersex, and other identifying (LGBTQI+) persons, the Report did not disaggregate by gender or sex. There was inadequate consideration of the particularly vulnerable position of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian women due to intersecting, multiple discrimination. Attention to boys, Gorani, Bosnians, and Turks remained minimal.
- Several **chapters did not contain any gender perspective at all** though they could have:<sup>4</sup> 3. Good Neighbourly Relations and Regional Cooperation; 4. Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia; 5. European Standards - Clusters 2: Internal Market, 4: The Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity, 5: Resources, Agriculture and Cohesion, and 6: External Relations; Annex I - Relations Between the EU and Kosovo; and Annex II – Statistical Data.
- Approximately **43% of WCSOs' recommendations** for the Report were addressed, a significant decrease compared to last year's Report (70%).
- In conclusion, overall the Report **regressed** in terms of gender-mainstreaming compared to 2023.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EC

- *Continue* seeking to mainstream gender in all relevant chapters.
- *Treat* gender-based violence in Rule of Law and social policy chapters with concrete recommendations for institutions responsible for implementing new legislation.
- *Ensure* sex-disaggregated data is included throughout the Report.
- *Pressure* the government to ensure all institutions submit data to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) in a timely manner and that KAS publishes this and other sex-disaggregated statistical data regularly, facilitating gender analysis. *Strongly encourage* completion of the Gender Equality Index.
- *Continue* encouraging the Government to institutionalise gender-responsive budgeting as part of ongoing public administration and public finance reforms, including by reflecting government responsibilities for gender-responsive budgeting at all levels clearly in forthcoming amendments to the laws on public finance, public procurement, and local government finance. Encourage the government to make publicly available in a timely manner information pertaining to gender-responsive budgeting in line with the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability ([PEFA](#)) [Gender Framework](#) and Sustainable Development Goal ([SDG](#)) [5.c.i](#).
- *Ensure* that officials consider the Law on Gender Equality and its foreseen affirmative measures during recruitment at all levels and in all sectors as part of merit-based hiring.
- *Encourage* the Government to ensure a gender-responsive approach to the digital transition, as well as to address gender-based cyberviolence, based on WCSOs' [recommendations](#).
- *Ensure* that sections reporting on security, report on security threats experienced at the local level, by WCSOs, and by diverse women and men in Kosovo and Serbia. Consult and draw from the expertise of grassroots and other WCSOs, which can provide relevant input.
- *Ensure* an inclusive, intersectional approach in the Report that attends to gender/sex and ethnicity, age, rural/urban location, disability, and other socio-demographic factors. Ensure data on minorities and persons with disabilities, among others, are always disaggregated by sex.
- *Continue* consulting CSOs, particularly WCSOs, to gather timely evidence to inform future reports, including on key issues related to gender equality.

<sup>4</sup> For specific examples of how these could have mainstreamed gender, see: KWN, [Commentary: A Gender Reading of the European Commission's Kosovo 2024 Report](#).