



Joint Input

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Compiled by:

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Security of Women in Kosovo and Women's Participation in Peacebuilding Processes

The political situation surrounding the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue is marked by significant challenges and a lack of progress. There has been a noticeable increase in tensions, with the EU expressing concerns that the stalemate could lead to instability in the region.¹ Despite ongoing talks, there have been no breakthroughs. The EU's Western Balkan (WB) envoy has highlighted the risks of continued deadlock, warning that it could provoke "outbursts of instability" in both Kosovo and Serbia.

Tensions in Northern Kosovo: In August 2024, Kosovo authorities shut down five "parallel" institutions serving the ethnic Serb minority in the north, citing violations of Kosovar laws. This action drew criticism from international actors, including the United States, and heightened regional tensions. In January 2025, Kosovo authorities announced the closure of all Serbia-run "parallel institutions" operating within its territory. These institutions included local administrations, postal services, and tax agencies in municipalities with significant Serb populations. The Kosovo government deemed these structures illegal and a violation of its sovereignty. The closures sparked protests among the Serb community in northern Kosovo. In North Mitrovica, dozens of Kosovo Serbs gathered to demonstrate against the shutdowns, expressing concerns over the loss of services and employment provided by these institutions. This has raised concerns about potential coercion with protests in Serbia and financial dependencies influencing participation in these demonstrations.

Despite ongoing developments, women remain underrepresented in senior political positions. Additionally, local-level civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly women's CSOs, continue to be side-lined and excluded from consultations on security-related matters. This exclusion has a disproportionate impact on women compared to men, undermining democracy and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. In the Mitrovica region specifically—including both the southern and northern areas—WCSOs have expressed concerns primarily related to political developments, restrictions on freedom of movement, and the fundamental right to live a normal, safe life. The lack of security in the north is especially alarming for women and girls. Since January 1, 2025, there have been 14 reported cases of the criminal offense of domestic violence by female victims of Serbian nationality. In addition, there have been 3 reported cases by female victims of criminal offenses against sexual integrity.² Women's underrepresentation in the police and security forces, particularly K-Serb women, exacerbates insecurities. Unemployment coupled with security concerns, particularly for women, risk contributing to emigration among K-Serbs, which could provide fuel further escalation of conflict, already fuelled through politically influenced mainstream media in Kosovo and Serbia

Recommendations (in accordance with UNSCR 1325 and the WPS Agenda)

- Include a gender perspective in the section on normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and report on the WPS Agenda as part of the EU-facilitated dialogue; encourage the governments of Kosovo and Serbia in the current round of negotiations to ensure that women are included as part of negotiation teams and to consult with diverse women's organisations, especially those in Mitrovica and Northern Kosovo.
- Call upon negotiating parties to include more women in peace-making processes and negotiation teams (via both Track 1 and 2 diplomacy).
- Strongly encourage negotiating parties to include on the agenda issues that women consider priorities.
- As per the EU's Action Plan on WPS and the EU Gender Action Plan III, implement measures developed based on the forthcoming gender responsive conflict analysis, ensuring a "do no harm" approach.

¹ Euractiv, Alice Taylor, [First effects of EU sanctions sting Kosovo](#), 5 July 2023.

² These data are provided by the prosecutor to Mitrovica Women's Association for Human Rights.

The Rise of Anti-Gender Movements in Kosovo and Challenges of Harmonization with the EU Gender Equality Acquis

The anti-gender movement in Kosovo, while not as visible or aggressive as in some other countries in the Western Balkans, is nonetheless increasingly evident and poses a growing challenge to gender equality, feminist activism, and the protection of marginalized communities. During recent electoral campaigns, women political candidates faced hate speech and online harassment with little institutional response. In reaction to efforts to protect LGBTQI+ rights within the draft Civil Code in 2024, the “Family List” Coalition was formed prior to the general elections of 2025. It evidences the risk of the anti-gender movement expanding in Kosovo. This is further evidenced by Kosovo’s continued failure to harmonize its legal framework with the EU Gender Equality Acquis.

The Law on Local Elections and the Law on General Elections still are not harmonised with the Law on Gender Equality (LGE), which calls for 50% equal representation of women and men. Women continue to be underrepresented. Although the general election law was amended in 2023, recommendations to harmonise it with the LGE were not implemented. This was reflected in the parliamentary elections of 2025 and continues to be concerning amid forthcoming local elections. It affects women’s representation in government and thus peace processes, despite WPS commitments.

The current Labour Law contributes directly to discrimination against women in hiring as employers seek to avoid paying for six months of maternity leave. The Labour Law is not aligned with the EU Work-Life Balance Directive. The Law has been under amendment for eight years and was removed from the legislative calendar this year, despite extensive civil society advocacy

Adopting the draft Civil Code of Kosovo has stagnated due to assembly members’ objections mainly to same sex marriage.³ The Law addresses several other important issues related to gender equality. For example, it would enable equal share of joint marital property among women and men spouses. Discussions surrounding same-sex unions instigated a homophobic campaign in 2022 and 2023 that violated basic human rights of LGBTQI+ individuals.⁴

The draft laws on public finance and public procurement have not been shared publicly. Concerns exist as to whether gender-responsive budgeting will be adequately incorporated as per EU Gender Action Plan III, Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Gender Framework and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.c.1. guidance. Despite requirements in the LGE and budget circulars, gender-responsive budgeting is not yet implemented because it is not integrated into the public finance management system; amending the public finance laws could support this and SDG 5 commitments.

Several laws, strategies, policies and programmes are undergoing reforms related to digitalisation, which have, to date, lacked a gender-responsive approach.⁵ An intersectional approach is still lacking related to gender analysis, gender mainstreaming laws and policies, and gender budgeting. Insufficient data are available disaggregated by gender and ethnicity or disability, which makes it difficult to carry out adequate analyses and thus to address diverse needs in policies. Generally, the Ministry of Finance, Labour, and Transfers (MFLT) has lacked transparency with the public. This Ministry holds several key competencies since the government closed the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and merged its responsibilities with the ministries of finance, justice, and health.

Recommendations

- Amid forthcoming municipal elections, call for harmonization of the laws on Local Elections and on General Elections with the Law on Gender Equality, towards equal participation of women and men, per WPS Agenda.

³ US Department of State, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Kosovo, March 2023, p. 33.

⁴ Centre for Equality and Liberty, “[The Draft Civil Code of Kosovo Violates Human Rights - CEL Kosova](#)”, April 4, 2024.

⁵ KWN, [Gender Equality: At the Centre of IT... and Beyond: A Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#), 2024.

- Call for the adoption of the amendments to the Labour Law in line with the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, including well-regulated maternity, paternity and parental leave and allocate resources for appropriately financing these leaves as well as for investing in expanding the availability of care services (also pressure the Government of Kosovo to include the Law on Labour on the legislative calendar as a priority).
- Call for the adoption of the Civil Code and Law on Civil Status to safeguard the fundamental rights of all individuals including those of diverse genders, gender identities and sexual orientations and to eradicate discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Family law.
- Pressure MFLT to share draft laws on public finance and procurement towards transparency and to ensure these incorporate best practices in gender-responsive budgeting; encourage the Government to consult and engage WCSOs that have extensive expertise in this to support amendments towards implementing gender-responsive budgeting in all stages of the budget cycle: planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation, as per SDG 5.c.1. and PEFA Gender Framework.
- Strongly encourage the Government of Kosovo and EU contractors engaged to include a gender-responsive approach to all laws, strategies, policies and programmes related to digitalisation in Kosovo, drawing from the EU-supported gender analysis.⁶
- Strongly encourage the Government to enforce existing requirements in the LGE to collect and utilise data disaggregated by sex and other sociodemographic indicators, publishing such data regularly by the Kosovo Agency for Statistics.

Gender-Based Violence: Gaps in Protection, Enforcement, and Access to Services

Femicide and other forms of gender-based violence continue to claim lives of women in Kosovo, revealing significant gaps in protective measures and inadequacies within the justice system, particularly in preventing recidivist violence. The Criminal Code lacks clear provisions on technology-facilitated violence and gender-based cyberviolence, which could facilitate access to justice in line with the new EU Directive on violence against women. Despite the existence of legal frameworks intended to address violence against women, enforcement remains weak and inconsistent.

Sexual violence and rape are among the most underreported forms of violence, with survivors often lacking access to appropriate services. Although Kosovo has ratified the Istanbul Convention, the establishment of Rape Crisis Centres—an essential obligation under the Convention—remains pending.

Shelter representatives have raised concerns about new Ministry of Justice practices that require victims to report violence to the police in order to access shelter services. This contradicts the Istanbul Convention, which explicitly upholds the right of survivors to choose whether or not to involve law enforcement. Modalities for their financing require further improvements for efficiency.

Marginalized communities—including Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Serbian women—face additional layers of discrimination; they encounter greater barriers in accessing justice and support services.

A lack of gender-responsive, victim-centred training among law enforcement and judiciary personnel contributes to the poor prosecution of perpetrators. Many are released without punishment or receive sentences that fall below the legal minimum. Although the government has adopted most secondary legislation to support implementation, significant capacity building is still required—specially to strengthen coordination mechanisms and train social service officers in survivor-centred case management. The current shortage of social workers undermines service quality and response capacity. While new legislation on sexual violence foresees budgeting for two new, specialised officers per municipality, it has not been implemented by municipalities or the MFLT despite CSO advocacy. Coordination among responsible institutions poor and has been weak at the national level among elections, given the political position of the National Coordinator.

⁶ Ibid.

On December 10, 2024, Kosovo introduced an electronic monitoring system for individuals suspected or convicted of gender-based criminal offenses. However, since its launch, only three electronic bracelets have been deployed, and technical issues—such as battery instability and the ease with which the devices can be removed—have raised questions about the system’s effectiveness and operational reliability.

In conclusion, while legal and policy progress has been made, Kosovo’s response to gender-based violence continues to fall short of international standards. Urgent investment in survivor-centred services, institutional capacity building, and accountability mechanisms is essential to protect women and girls and to fulfil commitments outlined in the Istanbul Convention.

Recommendations

- Encourage the government to amend the Criminal Code to include clearer provisions on technology-facilitated violence and gender-based cyberviolence to facilitate access to justice, based on expert CSO recommendations and in line with the new EU Directive.
- Advise the government to establish in close consultation with WCSO experts mandatory gender-responsive protocols updated in line with recent legal reforms for all actors in the justice system, including judges, prosecutors, and police, to standardize the response to gender-based violence.
- Call upon the government to establish and operationalize Rape Crisis Centres across the country, in accordance with the Istanbul Convention, to provide immediate medical, legal, and psychological support to survivors of sexual violence and rape.
- Advise the government to Institutionalise mandatory, ongoing training for police, judiciary, and social service providers on survivor-centred, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive approaches. Also, encourage more affirmative actions towards recruiting and hiring more women officers, particularly in the north.
- Ask the government to improve operations of municipal coordination mechanisms via institutionalised training, as well as coordination among government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners to ensure a holistic response to violence.
- Call upon the government to design targeted outreach programs for Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Serbian communities to build trust, raise awareness of rights, and ensure equitable access to services.
- Strongly encourage the new government to reopen the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, to budget adequately for social services per the legal framework, and to ensure uninterrupted coordination even amid elections (e.g. via the appointment of a civil servant as deputy coordinator).

General Recommendations

- Improve the intersectional perspective in the EC Report for Kosovo, recognising how gender intersects with other social markers including age, disability, ethnicity, urban/rural location, and how this leads to multiple discrimination in relation to, among others, access to education, employment, property and health services in relevant chapters.
- Integrate attention to gender in other sectors (see recommendations).