



Input for Enlargement Package 2026

Country: Kosovo

Short introduction

Kosovo has not had a functioning government since prior to the snap elections in February 2025, which has contributed to delays in the EU Accession process, including delays in adopting several key laws and policies. This also contributed to delays in implementing the Growth Plan, including opportunities to receive EU funding for reforms. Given the lack of functioning governments, progress in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue also has been delayed. A new government has recently been formed following the December parliamentary elections, but the failure to agree on a President may lead to new elections, contributing to continued delays in Kosovo's EU Accession process.

1. Women's political participation

The Law on General Elections and the Law on Local Elections still are not aligned with the Law on Gender Equality (LGE). While the LGE guarantees equal participation of women and men (50%) in decision-making, electoral laws require only a minimum 30% quota for each gender on political parties' candidate lists, enabling women's underrepresentation.

Following the 2025 local and national elections, women hold 36% of seats in municipal assemblies and 37% of seats in the Assembly of Kosovo. The latter marks an increase compared to 2007 (31%), when the gender quota was first introduced, but reflects no substantial change compared to the 2021 elections (36%).

What has changed significantly, however, is the number of women who required the quota to secure a seat. In 2007, 72% of elected women entered parliament through the quota. In 2021, that figure had fallen to 20%,¹ and in February 2025, it declined further to only 13% (no official breakdown exists yet for the December 2025 elections).² This suggests that the quota has contributed to more women being elected. Still, KWN research shows that predominately male-led political parties exert control over deputies and the issues that are raised and prioritised, leaving little space for women politicians to actually represent the interests of diverse women or advocate gender equality.³

In the 2021-2025 mandate, women led five of 15 ministries (33%). Following the formation of the new government in February 2026, women occupy only four of 19 ministerial posts (21%). The number of women Deputy Prime Ministers also has decreased, from two of three in 2021–2025 to just one of three in the current government.⁴ The 2025 local elections saw an increase in the number of women running for mayor, rising from 13 to 20 candidates. However, the number of women actually elected as mayor declined, with only one woman winning a mayoral seat compared to two in 2021.⁵

¹ KWN, 2025, [Peace and Security in Kosovo: A Gender Analysis](#).

² Democracy in Action, 2025, [Election Observation Report: Elections for the Assembly of Kosovo](#).

³ KWN, 2025, [Peace and Security in Kosovo: A Gender Analysis](#).

⁴ KWN, 2025, [Peace and Security in Kosovo: A Gender Analysis](#), p. 17; Anadolu Agency, 2025, "[Kosovo's parliament approves new government](#)", 12 February.

⁵ Democracy for Development, 2025, "[Gender Representation in the 2025 Municipal Mayoral Elections](#)", 9 November.



KWN research highlights various barriers to women's participation in politics, including patriarchal attitudes that extend into political parties and institutions; entrenched gender norms; and lack of care services. Women with disabilities, minority and rural women face added challenges, including inaccessible transportation, and are particularly underrepresented.⁶

The absence of a functioning government in the past year has resulted in the delayed adoption of several key laws and policies, negatively impacting women's labour rights, gender-responsive budgeting, and other areas. Civil society and other stakeholders fear that once a stable government is in place, laws and policies needed for continued EU reform support may be rushed through, leaving little time for meaningful consultation with or oversight by watchdogs and other (W)CSOs.

2. Developments on gender equality, anti-discrimination and LGBTQI rights

Kosovo's legal framework on gender equality, anti-discrimination and LGBTQI+ rights is broadly aligned with international standards, but its implementation is lacking or fragmented. The Constitution guarantees human rights and gender equality, and allows international agreements to take precedence over domestic laws. However, it does not explicitly reference the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities or UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

The Law on Gender Equality (LGE) sets out ambitious requirements but has not been fully institutionalised, and other laws (e.g. election laws) remain misaligned. Affirmative measures in recruitment and promotion, including in the civil service sector, are not fully implemented. Moreover, the LGE requires gender impact analyses of all draft laws and policies, but no procedure exists to ensure the government fulfils this obligation.

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), as foreseen by the LGE, Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the PEFA Gender Framework, which Kosovo has committed to, has not been fully implemented. In 2025, only 84% of local-level and 55% of central-level budget organisations submitted the mandatory GRB annex to the Ministry of Finance; those that were submitted were not made publicly available. The Law on Public Finance and the Law on Procurement do not institutionalise GRB; although amendments are underway, the process has lacked transparency, and requests to provide input have been ignored by the Ministry. The medium-term expenditure framework no longer includes objectives, indicators, baselines and targets to monitor how budgets contribute to gender equality aims. The 2025 central-level Law on Budget was not shared for consultation, while municipal budget consultations often are poorly timed and inadequately publicised.

The Kosovo Program for Gender Equality (2020–2024, currently being drafted anew), Rule of Law Strategy (2021–2026) and Transitional Justice Strategy (2024–2034) reference gender equality and women's participation but lack concrete targets, adequate budgets and effective monitoring. Few institutions implement the legal obligation to collect and report gender-disaggregated data to the statistics agency, hindering evidence-based, gender-responsive policymaking.

The Law on Protection from Discrimination and the Law on Labour prohibit discrimination, including in employment. However, KWN research has found implementation gaps.⁷ Women face discrimination in hiring in part due to how the Law on Labour is structured (see section 7). Disabled

⁶ KWN, 2025, [Peace and Security in Kosovo: A Gender Analysis](#). See also KWN, 2025, [Gender Analysis of Land Transportation in Kosovo](#).

⁷ KWN, 2022, [Gender-based Discrimination and Labour in Kosovo](#).



and minority women suffer multiple discrimination, especially related to education, employment and access to healthcare.

While Kosovo legally protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation, LGBTQI+ individuals continue to face social stigma, harassment, threats and intolerance, including from public officials and political actors.⁸ The parliament lacks adequate procedures for addressing hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric used by MPs. The Civil Code does not permit same-sex marriage and amendment attempts have been rejected.⁹

3. Gender-based violence, including different forms of violence (domestic violence, SRSV, forced marriages, on-line violence and trafficking in human beings etc.)

Kosovo has significantly improved its legal framework for addressing gender-based violence. In 2020, Kosovo amended its Constitution, incorporating the Istanbul Convention (IC). Domestic violence and sexual harassment are included in the Criminal Code of Kosovo. Several other laws have been revised to align with IC standards. In 2022, the Ministry of Justice adopted the National Strategy for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2022–2026, as well as the State Protocol for the Treatment of Sexual Violence Cases. Subsequently, in 2023, Kosovo adopted the Law on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women and Gender-based Violence.

Despite advancements, a victim-centred approach to addressing all forms of violence against women has not yet been fully implemented. Kosovo for example lacks rape crisis and sexual violence referral centres. Cyber violence and sexual violence remain insufficiently addressed in legislation, and implementation of the legal framework remains a challenge. As of December 2024, approximately 54% of the activities under the National Strategy were fully implemented, 42% partially implemented, and 5.5% had not been implemented.

KWN research shows that although institutions addressing gender-based violence have made some progress in knowledge and attitudes, significant gaps remain.¹⁰ Understanding of sexual violence is limited; harmful attitudes, including victim-blaming, persist, and resource constraints combined with poor institutional coordination put survivors at risk. Authorities continue attempts to reconcile couples, and officials still breach confidentiality. Police lack adequate training, and Victim Advocates are understaffed and thus often absent at police stations. Prosecutors confuse key terms and over-rely on victim testimony, leading to insufficient evidence and thus low sentencing.

The Institute of Forensic Medicine frequently relies on incomplete reports. Documentation of psychological trauma remains inadequate. Judges lack understanding of nuanced offenses, and prosecutions overall remain slow and inconsistent. Knowledge gaps and limited staff capacities are evident in schools, employment offices, vocational training centres, health institutions and among social workers.

Although shelter funding has improved, resources remain insufficient, particularly for reintegration support, and some municipalities continue to neglect their responsibility to finance shelters and social workers.

⁸ See further KWN, 2025, [Peace and Security in Kosovo: A Gender Analysis](#).

⁹ EuroNews, 2022, "[Kosovo's parliament rejects new law recognising same-sex civil unions](#)", 17 March.

¹⁰ KWN, 2025, [Zero Tolerance? Monitoring the Institutional Response to Gender-based Violence in Kosovo](#).



4. Developments on minority rights, refugees and asylum seekers

While the legal framework generally protects minorities, implementation remains a challenge. Hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric is used in election campaigns and in parliament with little accountability. Key laws advancing minority rights, such as the Civil Code, IVF Law, Labour Law and same-sex civil union proposals, have stalled amid backlash in parliament, which contradicts Kosovo's existing legal commitments. Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians face systemic racism, including violence, prejudice and hate speech. Minority women face discrimination in access to education, employment, healthcare and social services, including digital services. Translations in minority official languages (e.g. Serbian) are not always available despite legal obligations.

Minorities remain under-represented in the security sector, including the Kosovo Security Force, where only 4% of troops come from non-majority ethnicities, despite a 10% quota. Police forces do not always reflect the ethnic composition of the municipalities they serve, although evidence suggests that greater minority representation can enhance community security and build trust in institutions.¹¹

5. Developments on environment for civil society and consultations

Civil society operates in a generally enabling environment that is largely aligned with international standards, but challenges remain. Consultations with diverse civil society actors, including on EU reform processes and peace processes, such as the Belgrade–Pristina Dialogue, remain insufficient and poorly organised. (W)CSOs, if consulted, could provide buy-in and expertise towards more gender-responsive and inclusive processes.

Kosovo recognises CSOs as key service providers, but lacks a stable contracting framework.¹² The Administrative Instruction on public–private partnership has not been finalised, and there is no dedicated state budget line for CSO support. This limits sustainability; short contracts, often averaging less than five months, frequently disrupt the provision of essential services. Other challenges include delays in the transfer of funds and bureaucratic procedures that are not adapted to smaller and less-resourced CSOs, despite their effectiveness in reaching marginalised communities. The government recently published its new Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society for consultation. The draft Strategy lacks adequate gender analysis and commitments to allocate funding to CSOs. It also lacks alignment with the Law on Gender Equality.

Declining international donor funding risks undermining the work of think tanks, watchdogs and advocacy-oriented CSOs that play an essential role in independently holding the government accountable, including related to EU Accession.¹³

Kosovo has a tradition of volunteerism and giving, but private and corporate donations remain largely untapped sources of income for CSOs, partly due to gaps in the regulatory framework. Inconsistencies between laws limit tax incentives for donations to a narrow set of activities, excluding areas such as human and women's rights. Limited VAT exemptions for in-kind donations and legal uncertainties around certain fundraising methods create further barriers to resource mobilisation. A Law on Volunteerism has been initiated but not yet finalised; existing provisions exclude adult volunteers.

¹¹ KWN, 2025, [Peace and Security in Kosovo: A Gender Analysis](#).

¹² KWN, 2026, [Under Threat, and Resilient: The Situation of Women's Organisations in Kosovo](#).

¹³ Ibid.



Insufficient support for CSOs, including WCSOs, is particularly worrying concerning the rise of influential anti-rights and anti-gender movements in the region.

6. Developments on social policy and employment concerning women and other groups

Only 21% of Kosovar women are formally employed, while women are over-represented among informal workers (65%). This leaves women more exposed to insecure employment, low income, limited rights and long-term economic vulnerabilities, including lower pensions.¹⁴ These challenges are insufficiently addressed in current policy and legislation. The Strategy and Action Plan on informality should include gender-responsive measures, ensuring a “do no harm” approach, including through the Youth Guarantee Scheme. The Scheme aims to ensure youth who are not in employment, education or training receive a quality offer of work, education or training within four months, but it has not been fully implemented.

Factors contributing to women’s low formal labour force participation include limited childcare and care for the elderly and people with disabilities. Aligning with the EU Barcelona Objectives would enable more women to work by expanding care services, while also supporting children’s development and transforming unpaid work into paid labour.¹⁵

Gender pay and pension gaps persist. The Law on Labour and the Law on Protection from Discrimination lack harmonisation with the Law on Gender Equality. Termination of a probationary period due to pregnancy is, for example, not treated as direct discrimination, and women continue to face discrimination in part due to how the Law on Labour is structured; the Law is not aligned with EU acquis on maternity, paternity and parental leave (particularly the Work–Life Balance Directive). The cost of maternity leave falls largely on employers, which may discourage employment of women of childbearing age. Moreover, fathers are entitled to only two days of paid leave and two weeks of unpaid leave, compared to the Work–Life Balance Directive’s 10 days of paternity leave and four months of parental leave per parent. Beyond discouraging the hiring of women, this reinforces social norms that position women as caregivers and men as providers. Further, the Law on Labour does not include carers’ leave, which reinforces informal caregiving burdens falling disproportionately on women.

Kosovo’s Law on Safety and Health at Work is broadly based on related EU acquis, but implementation remains a challenge. There are not enough inspectors and they lack skills for inspecting gender-based discrimination. Sexual harassment at work remains widespread, underreported and poorly addressed. Reforms related to health and safety require a stronger gender perspective, given that women and men have different needs.

The quality of social services provided at the municipal level remains limited. Government contracting of CSOs services requires an institutionalised approach to prevent interruptions in services (see section 6). Most municipalities lack sufficient social workers and/or have not hired social workers specialised in gender-based violence, as foreseen by legislation. The capacity of municipalities concerning service planning and delivery, data collection, gender analysis and integrated care is weak.

People with disabilities (PwDs) face unequal access to education, employment and services, partly due to outdated and inconsistent legal definitions of disability that leave some groups unrecognised and ineligible for support. Cash assistance and personal assistance schemes are limited, covering only some

¹⁴ KWN, 2024, [In the Shadows – A Gender Analysis of Informal Work in Kosovo](#).

¹⁵ KWN, 2016, [Who Cares? Demand, Supply, and Options for Expanding Childcare Availability in Kosovo](#).



disabilities. Personal assistants, of whom the majority are women, operate outside the labour law with no training requirements or labour right protections. Personal assistance is not recognised as a rights-based service, resulting in lack of regulatory minimal standards, dedicated funding and oversight. Assistants earn less than minimum wage and no pension contributions.¹⁶

7. Developments on women, peace and security issues and resolution of ongoing conflicts

Women have been largely absent from the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, particularly in decision-making positions. Thus, the needs of diverse women have not been meaningfully addressed in it.¹⁷ The Dialogue does not consult sufficiently with civil society, limiting both women and men's ability to raise their priorities related to the Dialogue.

The Law on the Status and Rights of War Victims recognises survivors of sexual violence during the war but imposes deadlines and limits leaving some survivors, particularly from minority groups, without support.

The National Action Plan on WPS has not been renewed since its expiry in 2015. Prior programs and the forthcoming Kosovo Program for Gender Equality, however, is set to include a pillar on WPS. KWN and other WCSOs are supporting its drafting.

8. Developments on consumer and health protection

The absence of public health insurance disproportionately affects women, who often have fewer financial resources. Rural and minority women, as well as women with disabilities, face additional barriers to accessing quality healthcare due to limited transportation and weak and/or inaccessible health infrastructure.

Sexual and reproductive health remains a taboo topic, particularly in rural and conservative areas, limiting women's and girls' access to family planning and contraception. Sexual education still is not a standalone subject in schools, but is addressed only partially within other subjects such as biology.

Although Kosovo has an e-health information system, it is not used by all health institutions, and the lack of sex-disaggregated data hampers evidence-based, gender-responsive policymaking.

9. Recommendations for the 2026 Country Report

- Establish clear procedures for ensuring gender equality impact assessments are conducted by the government and quality assurance review of draft laws and policies by AGE prior to their adoption.
- Amend Assembly procedures to require (1) quality assurance of gender impact analyses accompanying all draft laws prior to adoption; and (2) active address of discriminatory rhetoric and practices.
- Establish permanent sector-specific monitoring bodies with elected civil society experts, including women's rights experts, to monitor and support EU reforms.

¹⁶ KWN paper forthcoming, 2026.

¹⁷ KWN, 2025, [Peace and Security in Kosovo: A Gender Analysis](#).



- Ensure the adoption of delayed key laws, including the Law on Labour, the Law on Public Finance and the Law on Procurement, ensuring they institutionalise gender-responsive budgeting and align with the Law on Gender Equality and relevant EU acquis.
- Provide transparent, sustained funding for diverse CSOs, including women's, minority and disability rights groups, including through the new Government Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society, the finalisation and adoption of the Administrative Instruction on public-private partnership, and the establishment of a dedicated state budget line for support to CSO service providers.
- Include clear definitions of Technology-Facilitated Gender-based Violence in the Criminal Code, based on KWN's recommendations.
- Ensure diverse women are consulted and engaged in the Pristina-Belgrade Dialogue at all levels.
- Adopt a new, comprehensive law on disability that includes all forms of disabilities and clear allocations and labour rights protections for personal assistants of PwDs.
- Call for all municipalities to implement gender-responsive budgeting, publish their GRB annexes as required by budget circulars, and budget for at least two social workers to be specialised in addressing gender-based violence as per the Protocol for treating sexual violence requirements.