



South East European Network
for Professionalization of Media

THE EXPANDING MEDIA LANDSCAPE, DECLINE IN JOURNALISTS' SAFETY, AND LOW MEDIA LITERACY

The Future of the Media in Kosovo – Facts and Trends

Jeton Mehmeti

OUR MEDIA:

A civil society action to generate media literacy and activism,
counter polarisation and promote dialogue



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COUNTER POLARISATION AND PROMOTE DIALOGUE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kosovo's population census of 2024 shows that there are fewer people in Kosovo compared to a decade ago. However, the average age of the population, currently standing at 34, is relatively young, which explains the massive use of social media as a means of information and communication. Although television remains the main source of information, social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, are slowly becoming alternative sources of information. This research aims to analyse the changing trends in the media use and media trust in Kosovo. This section summarizes the main trends affecting journalism, media, and democracy in the country.

Although television remains the main source of information, social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, are slowly becoming alternative sources of information.

- The number of students of journalism and communication at the University of Pristina has remained the same in the past three years. Its Department of Journalism had 250 students in 2023/2024. Two other private universities provide journalism studies but their student numbers are not available.
- The number of journalists has been increasing in recent years. The Kosovo Journalists Association has 720 members, including reporters, camera operators, and freelance journalists. The majority of members (65%) are women. Although membership is increasing, forming trade unions or being part of trade unions is not popular among journalists in the country.
- The number of registered attacks and violations of journalists rights has been growing in recent years. A total of 74 cases were reported in 2023, which is twice as many compared to 2022.
- National regulation in the media sector has not been updated since 2012. An attempt was made in 2024 when a new law on media was adopted in the Parliament, but it was challenged in the courts. The contested law provides new definitions of different types of the media (online, broadcast, video-sharing platforms, video on demand).
- The number of online news media has been growing, as well as the number of television stations. However, a negative trend has affected the print media. No daily or weekly newspapers or magazines are published in the country.
- Media transparency of ownership of broadcast media is regulated in the country as well as media concentration. Less information on media ownership is available on the online news media.

- The value of the advertising market is small for the large number of media. Latest data suggest that the total value is 15 million euros. Television still has the largest share in the value of the national advertising market, but the share of online media has been increasing.

- Media financing from the public budget is not specifically regulated. The public service broadcaster receives more than 90% of its budget from the state. Community media sometimes receive public money through subsidies and grants.

- The public service broadcaster allocates time in its programming for minority groups. All recognized ethnic minorities have their own programmes in the output of the public broadcaster.

- In 2023, television still had the largest audience reach, but online media and social networks are increasing their reach, especially among young people. Facebook, Instagram and TikTok are the most used video sharing platforms. Kosovo is almost at the bottom when it comes to ranking in the Media Literacy Index among European countries. In 2023, it was ranked in 40th place in a list of 41 countries.

- The Democracy Index, Rule of Law Index and Media Freedom Index have been improving but the level of perceived corruption index remains almost the same.

- Key data on the media and journalism are missing, especially in terms of audience and market analysis.

Kosovo is almost at the bottom when it comes to ranking in the Media Literacy Index among European countries. In 2023, it was ranked in 40th place in a list of 41 countries.

I.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a brief narrative description and analysis of an extensive data set. By using various indicators on media and democracy development, we aim to create a better understanding of the future of media in the country. The data set is divided into five main sections, namely general data about Kosovo, data about journalism, data about media, data about media use and media trust, and data about the level of democracy, rule of law and corruption. The available data were extracted from primary and secondary sources.

Kosovo's legal framework on media governance has not changed since 2012.

Certain information was missing at the time of the research. Most notably, the 2024 population census data were not published, with the exception of a few general data such as the overall population figure. Recent data are also missing in certain areas, especially on the value of the national advertising market, audience share, and media consumption. Precise data were hard to find in the area of economic welfare of journalists, therefore the average income level in the country was taken as a reference to indicate the average income of journalists. In other areas, such as the level of democracy, corruption perception, rule of law, and media literacy rate, international reports were used for data collection. These data are important for analyses, public discussion, and further qualitative research in the next phase of the project.

The future of media is a relevant topic in Kosovo. Media law, press freedom, disinformation, media literacy, strategic lawsuits against journalists, and threats and smear campaigns against media professionals are framing the discussion and research on the future of media in Kosovo. Kosovo's legal framework on media governance has not changed since 2012. Although the European Audiovisual Media Services Directive was updated in 2018, Kosovo has not yet managed to harmonize its media law. An attempt was made in 2023 when the Kosovo Government adopted the draft law on the Independent Media Commission (Kosova Sot Online, 2023); however, concerns were raised about its legal clarity, proportionality of measures, and deviation from European standards (Council of Europe, 2024). The Council of Europe published a legal opinion on the draft law suggesting that "media and communication governance should be based on evidence showing the need for intervention and take account of its regulatory and human rights impact to allow for a graduated and differentiated response respecting the roles played by different actors in the production, dissemination, and use of content" (Council of Europe, 2024).

A dual system of regulation and self-regulation is still in place. While the national regulatory authority, namely the Independent Media Commission

(IMC), has jurisdiction over broadcast media, such as radio and television, online news media are self-regulated through the Kosovo Press Council (KPC). Nearly 260 media outlets are licensed by the IMC, a sharp increase compared to ten years ago. New television channels have been established due to a rapid increase in the number of cable operators. Without a need for broadcasting frequencies, media companies were encouraged to establish their own television channels. Kosovo has witnessed a massive increase in online news media, too. Although their exact number is unknown, around 40 of them are members of the KPC. Given the diverse languages that Kosovo media operate in, media pluralism, along with media ownership transparency, has significantly increased in the country.

Despite the rapid increase in the use of social networks among the population, television remains the most often used source of news and information for the citizens of Kosovo.

Despite the rapid increase in the use of social networks among the population, television remains the most often used source of news and information for the citizens of Kosovo. According to a survey published by the International Republican Institute, television has been the main source of information for the past three years (Mehmeti, 2021). However, changes are evident when it comes to audience reach among different media types. While the audience reach of television is declining, from 82% (2021) to 61% (2024), the audience reach of social media is growing. The three most popular social media in Kosovo are Facebook 84%, Instagram 74% and TikTok 14% (International Republican Institute, 2024). This research shows that while the use of media is constantly increasing among Kosovo citizens, the level of media literacy has gone in the opposite direction. Kosovo's standing in the Global Media Literacy Index is down two places from the previous year, from 23 to 21 (Open Society Institute, 2023).

The research on future of the media was conducted simultaneously in all countries of the Western Balkans and in Turkey, aiming to identify and analyse the current state of play and emerging trends in media, journalism, and democracy. In the first part of the research, carried out between April and September 2024, a large set of data on journalism, media landscape, ownership and finances, media representation and participation, media use, media trust, and democracy was gathered and analysed on the country level. The identified trends, risks, and opportunities will be further analysed through interviews and focus groups with different stakeholders in the second part of the research in 2025, resulting in recommendations for safeguarding journalism, media, and democracy. The research is a part of the regional project "Our Media: A Civil Society Action to Generate Media Literacy and Activism, Counter Polarization and Promote Dialogue", implemented by nine media organizations from the Western Balkans, Turkey, and Slovenia in the period 2023–2026.

The factual data presented in the tables in this report are only the part of the extensive data collection presented in the separate data report, available at the web site of the Our media project.¹

1 Link to the Our Media project website: <https://seenpm.org/our-media-publications/>

II.

GENERAL COUNTRY DATA

According to the preliminary population census data, Kosovo's population is 1,586,659. The figure shows that the population is declining compared to the 2011 population registration when Kosovo had 1,739,825 inhabitants (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2011). The population registration was organized by the Kosovo Statistical Agency during April and May 2024. So far only a few preliminary data have been published and the final report will be published in the last quarter of 2024.

While the population has been declining, Kosovo's GDP per capita has been growing.

There has been great anticipation for the population census data, given that the process was planned to take place in 2021, exactly ten years after the 2011 census. For researchers, referring to the 2011 data is outdated, especially on matters related to the education and literacy rates. Therefore, the final report of the 2024 census will reveal accurate data about Kosovo's population, including the share of youth, the level of formal education, and the literacy rate. Given the political status of Kosovo, as a new state yet to be recognized in various international databases, there are no data on literacy rate in the World Population Review (2024).

While the population has been declining, Kosovo's GDP per capita has been growing. Kosovo's GDP in 2023 was USD 5,941. Similarly, the average salary in Kosovo has been increasing over the last three years. The average salary in 2023 was EUR 570 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2023). Due to a lack of precise data about the average salaries of journalists, the average salary in the national level is made as a reference to the average salaries of journalists. It should be noted, however, that the average salary in the public service broadcaster is higher compared to the private sector.²

² A survey organized by the Kosovo Journalists' Association in 2023 among its members and non-member journalists from Kosovo shows that based on the comments of the 212 respondents, including individuals from the public, private, nonprofit, and independent sectors, it has been found that salaries have increased by 28 per cent. In previous years, media workers received compensation of up to EUR 350. However, a significant change occurred in 2023 as 12 per cent of respondents reported earning up to EUR 350, while the majority stated that their salaries ranged up to EUR 600. A minority mentioned that their salary exceeded EUR 800 (Mulliçi and Morina, 2023).

Table 1: **GENERAL COUNTRY DATA**

Total population of the country in 2023	2024 preliminary population census data: 1,586,659
Population literacy rate in 2023	2011: 96.15% literate
GDP per capita in the country in 2023 (based on purchasing power)	USD 5,941
Average salary in the country in 2023	EUR 570

Sources: Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2024; 2011); Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2023); the World Bank (2023)

III.

THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM

Journalists in Kosovo are organized around the Kosovo Journalists Association (KJA). The KJA is a non-governmental organization headed by the Board. Kosovo journalists, including reporters, camera operators and freelancers are members of the KJA. The KJA currently has 720 members, including 30 freelance journalists. According to the KJA database, 65% of its members are female journalists.

The Kosovo Journalists Association is well organized and active, especially in advocating for a safer environment.

The overall number of journalists has been increasing over the past decade. One reason is the rapid rise of online media, which have replaced print newspapers completely. Another factor is that, compared to ten years ago, there are at least three universities that produce graduates in the field of media and communication studies. The total number of current journalism students is unknown. The public university alone, i.e. the University of Pristina, has 250 students in the Department of Journalism in the academic year 2023/2024. The data on the number of journalism students at two other private universities are not public.

Although the KJA represents the interests of Kosovo journalists, especially when it comes to their safety, there is no specific trade union of journalists that would advocate for the collective labour rights of journalists. Only the journalists of the public service broadcaster (Radio Television of Kosovo – RTK) are organized around the Trade Union, which also includes the other personnel of the RTK. RTK journalists are also more advanced in terms of salary income, given that the RTK is almost entirely funded from the state budget.

The Kosovo Journalists Association is well organized and active, especially in advocating for a safer environment. The number of attacks on journalists, including threats, intimidation, and physical attacks, has been growing in the past three years. In 2023 alone, there were 74 such incidents registered by the KJA (Kosovo Journalists Association, 2024). Cases of SLAPP have also been reported in Kosovo, but the exact number is unknown. Through the KJA, journalists are entitled to free legal protection. The Head of the Board and other board members are elected through an open and transparent process.

As a professional association of journalists, KJA is not divided or polarized across political affiliations. Several training events are organized throughout the year, targeting junior as well as mid-career journalists.

A Code of Ethics is also in place, setting journalism and media standards. The Independent Media Commission (IMC), the national regulatory authority on audiovisual media, enforces its Code of Ethics on television and radio, while the Kosovo Press Council enforces its Code of Ethics on online newspapers/news media. What is still missing, however, in the Code of Ethics / professional standards are provisions related to recent ethical standards such as technology, personal data, social networks, and artificial intelligence. The Press Council is the only self-regulatory body on the national level. It has 43 members and is responsible for processing complaints from the public regarding violations of the Code of Ethics by journalists. Membership in the Press Council has been steadily increasing over the years, which is a positive development for the future of media as it enhances the powers and capacities of the self-regulatory body. In 2023, Press Council processed 165 complaints (Press Council of Kosovo, 2023), which shows an increase in the overall number of complains in the last three years. In 21 cases, the Press Council has found a violation of the Code of Ethics regarding prohibition of incitement to hatred. Another 62 cases were found in violation of the Code of Ethics regarding fairness and impartiality in reporting. Violations were found by the national regulatory body (the IMC) on reporting during the election campaign. In the last parliamentary elections, in 2021, the IMC found 18 violations of the Code of Ethics during election campaign period (Independent Media Commission, 2021).

A Code of Ethics is in place, setting journalism and media standards. The Independent Media Commission enforces the Code of Ethics on television and radio, while the Kosovo Press Council enforces the Code of Ethics on online news media.

Access to public information is regulated by a specific law and enforced by a specific agency. The Law on Access to Public Documents is enforced by the Agency for Information and Privacy. The independence and efficiency of the enforcement body has led to an increase in requests for access to public information. This is a positive indicator for the future of media and journalism in Kosovo as legal mechanisms for access to public information are implemented in practice. Another important law, the Law on the Protection of Journalism Sources, protects journalistic sources and communication. Despite legal protection of journalism sources and protection from surveillance and deployment of any intrusive surveillance software to any material, digital device, machine, or tool used by them, there has been a report from one journalist about a tracking device found in his car, which compelled the KJA to issue a public statement to condemn the act (Kosovo Journalists Association, 2017).

Table 2: **DATA ON JOURNALISTS AND JOURNALISM**

Overall number of journalists in 2023	720
Overall number or percentage of female journalists in 2023	65%
Number of students of journalism (and communication and media studies) in 2023/2024 at the University of Pristina	250
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the number of journalism students growing, declining or remaining the same?	Remaining the same
Average salary of journalists in 2023	EUR 570
Number of attacks on journalists (and media) in the country in 2023 (including threats, intimidation, smear campaigns, physical attacks)	74 attacks and violations of journalists' rights
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the number of attacks on journalists growing, declining, or remaining the same?	Growing 2023: 74 2022: 33 2021: 29
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the number of complaints to the relevant national-level self-regulatory body growing, declining, or remaining the same?	Growing 2023: 165 2022: 104 2021: 129

Sources: Kosovo Journalists Association; Department of Journalism of the University of Pristina; Press Council of Kosovo (2023)

IV.

THE FUTURE OF MEDIA

4.1. CONCEPT OF MEDIA

In July, the Kosovo Parliament adopted a new law on the Independent Media Commission. This law, currently under review by the Constitutional Court, provides several definitions about the media, including online media and other media that have been created due to the advancement of technology (Kosovo Parliament, 2023). Such definitions do not exist in the current Law on the Independent Media Commission which was adopted in 2012. Nevertheless, the new definition of media and the legal obligations arising from legal definition of media have been the subject of public debate and criticism throughout 2024. These definitions have even been a subject to a legal opinion issued by the Council of Europe (2024). For the future of media in Kosovo, this means that some of the responsibilities that are currently carried out by the self-regulatory body (KPC) will be under the authority of the media regulator (IMC).

Table 3: DATA ON CONCEPT OF MEDIA

The definition of media is established in national regulation. YES/NO/Partly	YES
The definition/concept of media and legal obligations arising from the legal definition of media have been the subject of public debate and contesting arguments. YES/NO/Partly	YES

4.2. MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The number of media in the country has been growing in the past three years. The IMC has 259 licensees, which includes televisions, radio and cable operators. Among the licensed media is the Radio Television of Kosovo, the only public service broadcaster which has four television channels and two radio stations. The majority of media are private, commercial media, although a few operate as NGO media, too. The increasing number of media has a positive effect on the plurality of voices and the plurality of news sources. However, financial sustainability will be a challenge given the small advertising market in Kosovo.

Kosovo has had no print media since 2020. All daily newspapers stopped printing during the pandemic.

Kosovo has had no print media since 2020. All daily newspapers stopped printing during the pandemic. The outcome of this trend is the emergence of online news portals which in most cases publish brief news articles, without much context. In the long term this may have a negative impact on the culture of producing and reading long news reports and investigative analysis. The number of television channels has significantly increased in the past decade; however, only around 40 television channels have news content.³ On the other hand, out of 79 radio stations that operate in Kosovo, only four national radio stations have news, while around 66 others have regional or local news content. The exact number of online news media is unknown; however, one way to estimate their number is to look at the number of members of the Press Council. The self-regulatory body currently has 43 members, all representing online news media.⁴

In addition to receiving direct funds from the state budget, the public service broadcaster is also allowed to generate income from advertising. The total budget of RTK in 2023 was EUR 10.7 million, of which around EUR 9 million came from the state budget and EUR 0.5 million from advertising (Radio Television of Kosovo, 2024). The budget of RTK for 2023 is slightly higher compared to the 2022 budget of EUR 9.8 million, but significantly lower compared to the 2021 budget of EUR 12.2 million (Radio Television of Kosovo, 2024). Minority media, television channels, and radio stations in the language of minority communities also received some funds from the President's Office, Prime Minister's Office, and local governments. Information on the purpose, criteria, and decision-making are available to the public. Allocation of media support funds from international donors are also available, but the exact amount is unknown given the nature of such funds distributed through different projects.

3 Independent Media Commission, Baza e të dhënave e mediave audiovizuale të Kosovës, <https://regjistri.kpm-ks.org/>

4 Kosovo Press Council, Members, https://presscouncil-ks.org/?page_id=348&lang=en

Table 4: **DATA ON MEDIA LANDSCAPE**

Total number of media in the country in 2023	Around 260
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the number of media growing, declining, or remaining the same?	ND for all the media
Total number of public service media in the country (national, local) in the country in 2023	1 public broadcaster: 2 public radio channels 4 public TV channels
Total number of private, commercial media in the country in 2023	212 commercial broadcasters: 77 private radio channels 135 private TV channels (2024)
Total number of daily newspapers in the country in 2023	None
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the number of daily newspapers in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	N/A
Total number of national TV channels with news content in the country in 2023	40 est.
Total number of national radio stations with news content in the country in 2023	4
Total number of online news media in the country in 2023	43
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the number of online news media in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	N/D

Sources: Independent Media Commission; Kosovo Press Council

4.3. MEDIA OWNERSHIP

Media ownership transparency and media concentration is regulated by a specific by-law that was adopted in 2023 by the Independent Media Commission (Independent Media Commission, 2023). All licensed media are required to disclose information about their owners. The IMC makes such information available to the public through a user-friendly platform called the Media Register.⁵ If the number of employees is taken as a reference on the size of media, then it is safe to say that ownership on the biggest media has not changed in the past three years. Foreign ownership is allowed in Kosovo, with some television channels owned by Albanian companies.

Table 5: **DATA ON MEDIA OWNERSHIP**

Name the 3 biggest media owners in the country (owners of the biggest number of media and/or with the biggest audience reach and/or the biggest share in the advertising market). Add information about the country of origin for each of the 3 biggest media owners.	N/D
TREND in the past 3 years: Has the list of the top 3 media owners in the country changed? YES/NO	N/D
Media ownership concentration is regulated in the country. YES/NO/Partly	YES
Is transparency of media ownership regulated by law? YES/NO/Partly	YES
Media ownership is transparent in the country (credible information about who owns media is published). YES/NO/PARTLY	YES

Source: Independent Media Commission (2023)

⁵ Independent Media Commission, Baza e të dhënave e mediave audiovizuale të Kosovës, <https://regjistri.kpm-ks.org/>

4.4. MEDIA FINANCING

Recent data are missing with regard to the value of the national advertising market. An IPSOS study estimated that the value of the advertising market in Kosovo in 2018 was, EUR 15 million, of which EUR 8.8 million went to television channels, EUR 2.27 million to online media and only EUR 0.69 million to radio stations (Mehmeti, 2020). Proper, recent, and verified data on major financial sources such as advertising are necessary for effective media market development in Kosovo and for the sustainability of media.

Table 6: **DATA ON MEDIA FINANCING**

Total value of the national advertising market (including all types of media) in 2023, in EUR	2018: EUR 15 million
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the total value of the national advertising market growing, declining, or remaining the same?	N/D
Share of TV in the value of the national advertising market in 2023	2018: EUR 8.8 million
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the share of TV in the value of the national advertising market growing, declining or remaining the same?	N/D
Total budget of the national public service broadcaster in 2023, in EUR	EUR 10.7 million
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the total budget of the public service broadcaster growing, declining, or remaining the same?	Declining 2022: EUR 9.8 million 2021: EUR 12.1 million
Share of the total budget of the national public service broadcaster in 2023 received from the state budget	EUR 8.9 million
Total amount of public funding (grants and subsidies) from the national government and local governments to media in the country in 2023	N/D
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the total amount of public funding (grants and subsidies) to the media in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	N/D

Obligations of public bodies, institutions, and companies to publish data on funding to media are regulated by law? YES/NO/Partly	YES
Data on allocated amounts of public funding to media outlets are published. YES/NO/Partly	Partly
Total amount of state advertising (advertising of state bodies, institutions and state-owned companies) in the media in the country in 2023	N/D
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the total amount of state advertising in the media in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	N/D
Total amount of international donor funding to the media in the country in 2023	N/D
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the total amount of international donor funding to the media in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	N/D

Sources: Mehmeti (2020); Radio Television of Kosovo (2024)

4.5. MEDIA REPRESENTATION

The number of female journalists overall is bigger than the number of male journalists. Due to the lack of data on the top 5 television broadcasters, radio stations, non-profit media, and online news media, it is hard to estimate the number of women in editorial positions. With regard to the share of women and the share of persons with an ethnic minority background in the governing body of the public service broadcaster, there are four women and two members with an ethnic minority background out of nine members, while in the national regulatory body, there is only one woman and only one member with an ethnic minority background out of a five-member board. Speaking of minority groups, all recognized ethnic minority communities have a specific allocated time in the output of the public broadcaster.

Table 7: **DATA ON MEDIA REPRESENTATION**

Share of female journalists in the country in 2023	65%
Share of journalists with an ethnic minority background in the country in 2023	N/D
Share of women among news programme editors-in-chief and managers of the top 5 TV channels with news content in the country in 2023	N/D
Share of persons under the age of 40 among news programme editors-in chief and managers of the top 5 TV channels with news content in the country in 2023	N/D
Share of persons with an ethnic minority background among news programme editors-in-chief and managers of the top 5 TV channels with news content in the country in 2023	N/D
Share of women on the board of the national regulatory authority for media in 2023	1 woman out of 5 members
Share of persons with an ethnic minority background on the board of the national regulatory authority for media in 2023.	1 person out of 5 members
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the number of minority media in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	N/D
Minority media were supported by public funding in 2023. YES/NO/Partly	YES
Which minority communities are not served by own media or minority programming in national public service broadcasting?	All recognized minorities have allocated time in the output of the public broadcaster.

Source: Kosovo Journalists Association; Independent Media Commission; Radio Television of Kosovo

4.6. MEDIA PARTICIPATION

The majority of media in the country provide mechanisms for participation and interaction with citizens, listeners, or viewers. Among the three most common mechanisms used by the public to participate in the media are: commenting on social media, through complaints mechanisms, or sometimes speaking directly to the media.

Table 8: **DATA ON MEDIA PARTICIPATION**

The majority of the media in the country commonly provide mechanisms for participation and interaction with citizens/ readers, listeners, viewers (comment sections, letters to the editor, forums, blogs, readers' editor, ombudsman, other type of complaint mechanism, membership, internship, focus groups...). YES/NO/Partly	YES
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the number of mechanisms for participation in the media in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same (e.g. comment sections closing down or opening, ombudsman established or shut down etc.)?	Remaining the same
3 most common mechanisms of (citizen) participation in media in the country	Social media comments, complaint mechanisms, vox pop

V.

THE FUTURE OF MEDIA USE AND TRUST

5.1. MEDIA USE

According to a 2024 survey published by the International Republican Institute, television is the most often used source of news and information for Kosovo citizens, followed by social media (International Republican Institute, 2024). The trend has not changed in the past three years, as another survey of 2021 shows (Mehmeti, 2021). However, changes are evident when it comes to audience reach among different media types. For instance, a comparison between two surveys shows that the audience reach of television has declined from 82% (2021) to 61% (2024). The audience reach of social media is quite high (65% in 2021). Facebook 84%, Instagram 74%, TikTok 14%, are the three most popular social media currently in Kosovo (International Republican Institute, 2024).

Facebook 84%, Instagram 74%, TikTok 14%, are the three most popular social media currently in Kosovo.

With regard to media literacy in the country, Kosovo currently has a score of 21 in the global index, which runs from 0 to 100, where a higher score means higher media literacy of the population. The same source shows that there has been a decline in the Media Literacy Index compared to the previous year, from 23 to 21 (Open Society Institute, 2023). The Media Literacy Index was developed by the Open Society Institute – Sofia to include 35 European countries. In 2022, the number of countries was expanded to 41 countries in Europe. At the bottom of the ranking, Georgia occupies the last place with 20 points, preceded by Kosovo with 21 points in 40th place, North Macedonia with 23 points in 39th place, and Bosnia and Herzegovina with 24 points in 38th place. The Media Literacy Index takes into account various indicators such as quality of education, the level of media freedom, trust in people, and e-participation. Of all indicators, quality of education could be the main factor affecting Kosovo's low Media Literacy Index score. In general, it is thought that people who are more educated are more informed, are better critical thinkers, and are less likely to fall into the trap of fabricated news (Open Society Institute, 2023). Kosovo's low score on PISA reading performance speaks of the overall quality of education in the country (OECD, 2023).

Table 9: **DATA ON MEDIA USE**

Media type that is the most often used source of news and information for citizens in the country in 2023	Television (2024)
TREND in the past 3 years: The media type which is the most often used source of news and information for citizens in the country changed. YES/NO If yes, from which type to which type?	NO
Which media type was the most often used source of news and information for youth (age between 15 and 29) in the country in 2023?	N/D
Audience reach of the media type "Television" in the country in 2023	61% (2024)
Top 3 most popular (most used, visited) social media in the country in 2023	Facebook: 84% Instagram: 74% TikTok: 14%
Top 3 most popular (most used, visited) social media among youth (age between 15 and 29) in the country in 2023	Facebook Instagram TikTok
Top 3 most popular (most watched) TV news shows in the country in 2023	N/D
Media Literacy Index for the country in 2023	Score 21/100
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the Media Literacy Index growing, declining, or remaining the same?	Declining 2022: 23/100
Media literacy is a separate subject in elementary or secondary schools. YES/NO/Partly	NO

Sources: International Republican Institute (2024); Open Society Institute (2024)

5.2. MEDIA TRUST

When it comes to media trust, overall Kosovo citizens place a great amount of trust in the media. In the absence of more recent data, we can refer to an IPSOS survey of 2021, which shows that the level of trust in the media is 64%, where television was the most trusted media source, followed by social networks and online media (Mehmeti, 2021). However, trust in the media came in the 7th place on a list of ten institutions (International Republican Institute, 2024a). Another opinion poll, conducted by the Regional Cooperation Council in 2023, shows that the top 3 most trusted institutions in Kosovo are the Parliament, the Government, and law enforcement.⁶

Table 10: **DATA ON MEDIA TRUST**

Level of overall trust in media in the country in 2023 (in percentage)	2021: 64% (includes both those who completely have trust and mainly have trust)
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the level of overall trust in media in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	N/D
Top 3 most trusted media types in the country in 2023	Television, social networks, online media (2021)
TREND in the past 3 years: The order of the top 3 most trusted media types in the country has changed. YES/NO. Which media types have changed places among top 3?	N/D
In which place do the media stand in the ranking of the most trusted institutions in the country in 2023?	7th out of 10 places
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the ranking (place) of the media among the most trusted institutions in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	Remaining the same

Sources: Mehmeti (2021), International Republican Institute (2024a)

⁶ Regional Cooperation Council, Balkan Public Barometer, <https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/results/2/public>

VI.

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

Kosovo's position has also improved in the Global State of Democracy Index, from 77th place in 2021 to 73rd in 2022 (The Global State of Democracy Initiative, 2023). However, other polls shows that the level of trust in the judiciary is in decline, from 61% in 2022 to 45% in 2023 of people who totally trust or tend to trust the judiciary.⁷ A slight growing trend is, however, evident in the Rule of Law Index, from 0.55 (2021) to 0.56 in 2023 (World Justice Project, 2023). A positive trend is also seen in terms of voter turnout in the last two parliamentary elections, from 44% in 2019 to 49% in 2021 (Central Election Commission, 2021). In the Corruption Perceptions Index, Kosovo remains in the same position in 2023 compared to 2022 (Transparency International, 2023).

In the Corruption Perceptions Index, Kosovo remains in the same position in 2023 compared to 2022.

On the other hand, progress was made from 2022 to 2023 in the Media Freedom Index from 67 to 68.38 according to Reporters Without Borders (2023). One reason for the positive trend could be that the legislation protecting freedom of expression and media freedom follows international standards and, to a large degree, is implemented in practice, especially when it comes to freedom to publish investigative reports, in the protection of journalism sources, and in the protection of whistleblowers. The legislation on election also follows international standards. However, the overall ranking position is still considered 'problematic' on the global press freedom map and one reason for that could be the increasing threats against journalists.

According to the 2024 European Commission Country Report on Kosovo, the Law on general elections, which includes articles on election campaigns, is in line with EU standards. However, this law it is yet to be tested in practice as the next parliamentary elections are scheduled in February 2025. Other fundamental rights are also guaranteed in Kosovo, such as the right to public assembly, the right to access public information, the right to information on spending of public funds. Respective independent and functioning institutions, such as the General Auditor's Office, the Central Election Commission and the Agency on Information and Privacy, ensure the respect of such fundamental rights.

⁷ Regional Cooperation Council, Balkan Public Barometer, <https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/results/2/public>

Table 11: **DATA ON DEMOCRACY**

Democracy Index of the country in 2023	73 rd place in representation in the Global State of Democracy Initiative (The top score is 0.88 (Sweden) which is ranked as number one in representation, and the lowest score is 00)
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the Democracy Index of the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	Growing 2022: 73 rd 2021: 77 th
Rule of Law Index of the country in 2023 (according to the World Justice Project)	0.56 (The maximum index is scored by Denmark 0.90, which is ranked as number one in the Rule of Law Index, while Kosovo, with an index score of 0.56, is ranked 58 th)
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the Rule of Law Index of the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	Growing 2023: 0.56 2022: 0.56 2021: 0.55
Corruption Perceptions Index for the country in 2023	Score: 41/100 Score ranges from 0 to 100 (with 0 being highly corrupt and 100 being very clean)
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the Corruption Perceptions Index for the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	Remaining the same 2023: 41/100 2022: 41/100 2021: 39/100
Media Freedom Index in the country in 2023	68.38/100 (A higher index score means better environment for the freedom of media)
TREND in the past 3 years: Is the Media Freedom Index in the country growing, declining, or remaining the same?	Growing 2022: 67 2021: 69.68
Is there is transparency and open public access to data about the spending of public funds? YES/NO/Partly	YES
Legislation on access to public information follows international standards. YES/NO/Partly	YES

There is a functional and credible independent institution supervising the implementation of legislation on access to public information, including the administration of complaints regarding denied access. YES/NO/Partly	YES
Were there government or parliament members under prosecution for charges of corruption or other criminal charges in 2023? YES/NO	N/D
Does legislation allow political party ownership in the media in the country? YES/NO/Partly	NO

Source: The Global State of Democracy Initiative (2023); World Justice Project (2023); Reporters without Borders (2023); Transparency International (2023)

VII.

CONCLUSIONS

Kosovo enjoys a relatively good legal framework when it comes to the protection of freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Laws concerning protection of journalism sources, protection of whistleblowers, and access to public information appear to be in line with European standards. The overall number of journalists has been increasing over the past decade. Their salaries have also improved compared to previous years, although the inflation rate has also significantly increased. The number of journalists is related to the increasing number of new media. Online news media have replaced print newspapers completely. Three different universities produce graduates in the field of media and communication studies. The public university alone has 250 students in the Department of Journalism.

One area that needs significant improvement, though, is enhancing media literacy skills. Kosovo currently stands at the bottom of the table for the Media Literacy Index score. The quality of education can contribute to the ability of young generations to critically engage with the media. The future of media and democracy in Kosovo depends on other factors, too. Significant improvements in the rule of law and fight against corruption are needed to ensure better prospects for the future of media and journalism in Kosovo.

One area that needs significant improvement is enhancing media literacy skills.

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THE EXPANDING MEDIA LANDSCAPE, DECLINE IN JOURNALISTS' SAFETY, AND LOW MEDIA LITERACY

The Future of the Media in Kosovo – Facts and Trends

This publication is the result of research undertaken as part of the project **“Our Media: A civil society action to generate media literacy and activism, counter polarisation and promote dialogue”**. The second research series was conducted in the thematic framework titled **“The Future of the Media in the Western Balkans and Turkey”**, focusing, in 2024, on collecting and analysing the facts and trends on media and democracy in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey.

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