

## KOSOVO

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Climate change is at the very bottom of the list of priorities for politicians and the public in Kosovo. This can be explained by the fact that the country was caught up in a brutal war 15 years ago and only declared its independence six years ago. The country is still grappling with numerous problems related to the transition, so issues such as climate change, energy supply and security, and environmental protection are not yet attracting the necessary attention. The political agenda has other priorities, such as gaining international recognition for the country, developing the rule of law and dealing with economic problems – in particular tackling unemployment, which is extremely high, and fighting corruption and crime.

Kosovo lacks a public awareness of, and sufficient information on, the ways in which climate change will impact people. Yet the country is very much affected by climate change, as two of its most important economic sectors, agriculture and forestry, are climate dependent.

In 2012, the UNDP compiled an inventory of the effects of greenhouse gases in Kosovo and found that most emissions come from the energy industry (electricity supply, mainly from coal-fired power plants), which produces roughly 82 percent of the country's total greenhouse gas emissions (10,507.2 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> eq.), mainly through burning fossil fuels like lignite and wood.<sup>1</sup>

Kosovo is making efforts to address these problems. At the moment, this involves producing overviews of the situation and drawing up strategies. The Kosovo Environment Protection Agency, which was set up by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, produces a report on Kosovo's environmental situation every two years. The last report on monitoring air quality in Kosovo in the 2010–2012 period was prepared and published by the Kosovo Environment Protection Agency in collaboration with the Hydro-meteorological Institute of Kosovo, the Kosovo Energy Corporation and Ferronikeli, Kosovo's leading metal processing company. Parameters measured for 2012



*A lignite-fired power plant near Obilić. Kosovo wants renewable energies to cover 26 percent of its energy needs by 2020. At the moment they account for less than 3 percent.*

(dust, SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub>) showed that the country as a whole was not substantially exceeding the acceptable, prescribed levels. However, in highly industrialised areas, such as Elez Han (home to the country's largest cement processing plant) and Gjilan (home to numerous quarries), the parameter readings were far in excess of acceptable levels and were described as posing a threat to the health of the local population.<sup>2</sup> Despite knowledge of what harmful emissions mean for the public, no far-reaching measures (e.g. introducing low-emission, low-pollution vehicles to the public transport network) have been taken to improve the situation so far.

In the past, the European Commission's annual progress reports for Kosovo invariably criticised its lack of national climate strategy. One of the main reasons for the delay in developing such a strategy was the high cost of implementation, which was estimated at €300 million. At the end of 2013, however, Kosovo finally presented a climate strategy, entitled National and International Challenges of Climate Change, albeit without a plan of how it was going to cover the costs of implementation.<sup>3</sup> Among other things, the strategy

1 | USAID, *Kosovë: 2014–2018. Strategjia për Bashkëpunim për Zhvillimin e Vendit* (Kosovo: 2014–2018. National Development Cooperation Strategy), Priština, p. 8, [http://usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/CDCS\\_Kosovo\\_2014\\_ALB.pdf](http://usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/CDCS_Kosovo_2014_ALB.pdf) [28 July 2014].

2 | Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency, *Raport për gjendjen e Mjedisit 2011–2012* (Staatlicher Umweltbericht 2011–2012), p. 11, Priština, 2013, [http://ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Raporti\\_Gjendja\\_e\\_Mjedisit\\_Web\\_Shqip.pdf](http://ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Raporti_Gjendja_e_Mjedisit_Web_Shqip.pdf) [28 July 2014].

3 | Cf. KosovaLive Media Group, "Prezantohet strategjia për ndryshimet klimatike në Kosovë" (Presentation of Kosovo's climate strategy), <http://kosovalive360.com/prezantohet-strategjia-per-ndryshimet-klimatike-ne-kosove.html> [15 May 2014].

shows that Kosovo does not yet have a database of greenhouse gas emissions, and that it does not know when it will start evaluating emissions.

The strategy<sup>4</sup> sets out the following priorities: finalise the laws on environmental protection in line with EU law; gradually fulfil EU standards; effectively implement and integrate the legislation in all sectors; use natural resources efficiently; develop long-term education programmes, campaigns and projects to raise public awareness; support concepts for producing clean energy; and apply the principle of energy efficiency in all sectors of energy use. The document represents a turning point in Kosovo's policies relating to European directives because it addresses the commitments that the country needs to undertake if it is to meet EU standards on climate protection.

This is especially important given that, while Kosovo's industry is relatively underdeveloped and does not produce many carbon emissions, its energy sector still relies primarily on coal.<sup>5</sup> Using coal to generate energy goes against European guidelines and targets for environmentally friendly energy production. In light of this, Kosovo's government has made increasing energy efficiency measures and incentives for using alternative and renewable energy sources part of its energy strategy for the 2009–18 period. This has led to the first tentative forays into wind and solar technologies. There appears to be a growing awareness that a legal framework – made up of tax breaks, for instance, for the purchase of new systems or for feeding unused electricity into the grid – will be needed to make these types of energy attractive to investors.<sup>6</sup> Kosovo is aiming to have renewable energies such as wind, hydro and solar covering 26 percent of its energy needs by 2020. At the moment they account for less than 3 percent.

Overall, we can say that Kosovo now has relevant strategies and laws in place but that it is still lacking in an active approach to a public debate on energy policy. A number of international organisations in Kosovo actively collaborate with state institutions and policy makers to stimulate political discussion, research and motivation for the topic. The most important activities in this area are the UNDP's programme on energy efficiency, the GIZ programmes on efficiency and renewable resources, and investments from KfW Development Bank.

Kosovo is not currently part of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and has not signed the Kyoto Protocol. It has, however, committed to aligning its legislation with EU law. To do this, Kosovo's policy makers will have to take important steps with regard to energy market regulations so that, for instance, they comply with standards on calculating and paying for energy.<sup>7</sup> The EU's progress report regularly warns that only a small share of the energy generated in Kosovo is actually paid for. The same applies to environmental protection. While Kosovo does have the necessary state institutions (e.g. an environment ministry and an agency for environmental protection), it will have to work harder on producing appropriate legislation if it is to comply with the provisions of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. Above all, the country's decision makers and political elite must recognise the need for helping Kosovo make progress in environmental protection. They must also raise public awareness of why, in terms of health and quality of life, it is important to become more active in this area. And they must make it clear that, rather than standing in the way of economic progress, protecting the environment can actually benefit it.

4 | Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, *Strategjia Kornizë për Ndryshimet Klimatike për Kosovën* (Climate Change Framework Strategy for Kosovo, Climate protection directives), Priština, 2013, p. 21, [http://mmph-rks.org/repository/docs/Strategjia\\_Kornizë\\_për\\_Ndryshime\\_Klimatike\\_për\\_Kosovë\\_19022014\\_FINAL\\_81170.pdf](http://mmph-rks.org/repository/docs/Strategjia_Kornizë_për_Ndryshime_Klimatike_për_Kosovë_19022014_FINAL_81170.pdf) [28 July 2014].

5 | Energjia.al, "19 miliardë tonë thëngjill në Kosovë" (19 billion tonnes of coal in Kosovo), *Gazeta Zeri*, 7 October 2010, <http://energjia.al/2010/10/07/19-milardetone-thengjill-ne-kosove> [28 July 2014].

6 | Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Energy and Mining, *Strategjia e Energjisë e Republikës së Kosovës 2009–2018* (Energy Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo from 2009–2018), Priština, 2009, pp. 76–78, [http://mzhe.rks-gov.net/repository/docs/STRATEGJIA\\_E\\_ENERGJISE\\_E\\_REPUBLIKES\\_SE\\_KOSOVES\\_2009-2018.pdf](http://mzhe.rks-gov.net/repository/docs/STRATEGJIA_E_ENERGJISE_E_REPUBLIKES_SE_KOSOVES_2009-2018.pdf) [28 July 2014].

7 | Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Economic Development, "Beqaj: Concrete projects for the energy sector", 6 September 2012, <http://mzhe.rks-gov.net/?page=2,42,539> [28 July 2014].