

REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

FACTS AND FIGURES

Foreign policy · Society · Economy · Culture

2020
EDITION

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Foreign policy · Society · Economy · Culture

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FOREWORD

Kosovo is the newest country in Europe, having declared independence in 2008. With 70% of the population under 35 years old, there is another sense in which it is the youngest country in Europe. Its recent statehood and youthful population make Kosovo a vibrant and energetic place where a rich cultural heritage of costumes and traditions has been preserved. Among these traditions is the now famous Kosovan hospitality, generosity and ability to create an inviting environment for everyone who visits the country. It is a must-see for anyone who loves a good macchiato or likes to enjoy fine dining on a low budget.

Kosovo has a multiethnic character and is a secular state with a population of around 2 million. It is open to foreign investments, with tax rates that are the lowest in Europe. Kosovo has a strong connection to Western culture through its diaspora: Switzerland and Germany each host around 200.000

Kosovars – equivalent to 20% of Kosovo's resident population.

Through this publication, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and its partner, the German-Kosovar Chamber of Commerce, aim to share basic information about the Republic of Kosovo. The text is targeted at members of the international community who need additional information about the country within a single publication. The publication is divided into 17 chapters, each of them sharing information in facts and figures about the country. The Republic of Kosovo: facts and figures aims to help Kosovo promote itself internationally and present the opportunities available.

We wish you pleasant and interesting reading.

*Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
German-Kosovar Business Association*



AT A GLANCE

The Republic • Crests & Symbols • Demographics • Geography & Climate •
Parliament & Parties • Government • The President • Judiciary

by Jeta Krasniqi

*Project Manager and Senior Researcher at the Democratic Institute of Kosovo /
Transparency International Kosovo*

THE REPUBLIC

Kosovo is a multi-party parliamentary representative democratic state. It is governed by legislative, executive and judicial institutions which derive from the constitution, which is the highest legal act of the Republic of Kosovo. The government exercises the executive power and is composed of the Prime Minister as the head of government, with deputy prime ministers and the ministers of the various ministries. The President is the head of state.

Since declaring its independence, Kosovo has gained diplomatic recognition as a sovereign state by 116 states.

Kosovo is administratively subdivided into seven districts and 38 municipalities. Municipalities in Kosovo are units of local self-government. The largest municipality is the capital city, Pristina/ Prishtina, with a population of 204,721. ■

The administrative map of districts in Kosovo



- District of Ferizaj
- District of Gjakova
- District of Gjilan
- District of Mitrovica
- District of Pristina
- District of Prizren

Coat of arms



The **coat of arms** shows six white stars in an arc above a solid golden outline of Kosovo, as seen on a standard projection map, placed on a rounded triangular shield with a blue field and a golden border. Its central figures, the stars and the map outline, are also the components of the flag of Kosovo, adopted at the same time.

Constitution



The **Constitution** of the Republic of Kosovo, which was signed on 7 April, 2008, separates the government into three branches: the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.

Flag



The **flag** of Kosovo shows six white stars in an arc above a golden map of Kosovo on a blue field. The stars symbolize Kosovo's six major ethnic groups.

National day



17 February is a **national holiday** commemorating the fact that on that date in 2008, the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo promulgated the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Currency



The country's **official currency** is the euro. Kosovo is not a member of the Euro Zone but the country unilaterally adopted the euro in 2002 during the United Nations Interim Administration mandate and has used it ever since as its de facto currency.

National Anthem

'Europe' is the national anthem of Kosovo. It was composed by Mendi Mengjiqi. It has no official lyrics, and one of the reasons for this choice was because it contained no references to any specific ethnic group, but unofficial lyrics have been written for it. It was adopted on 11 June 2008.

♩ = 70

Piano *f*

5

Pno. *mp*

9

Pno.

13

Pno.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The average life expectancy in the Republic of Kosovo is 71.65 years. Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe with half of its population under the age of 25, according to a recent report by the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP. Government data estimates that more than 65% of the population is younger than 30. Kosovo's birth rate remains the highest in Europe.

According to the first census conducted after the declaration of independence, in 2011 the permanent population of Kosovo had reached 1,739,825, excluding North Kosovo. Albanians form the majority in Kosovo, with over 93% of the total population; significant minorities include Ashkali, Bosniaks, Croats, Egyptians, Gorani, Roma, Serbs, and Turks. However, the 2011 Kosovo population census was largely boycotted by the Kosovo Serbs, especially in North Kosovo, leaving the Serb population underrepresented.

The results of the 2011 census gave the following religious affiliations for the population included in the census: Islam 95.6%, Christianity 3.7% of which Catholic 2.2% and Orthodox 1.5%, other 0.1%, no religion 0.1% and not stated 0.6%.



LIFE EXPECTANCY

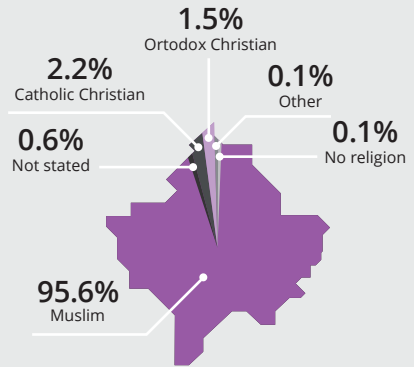
79 years / 74 years

Women

Men

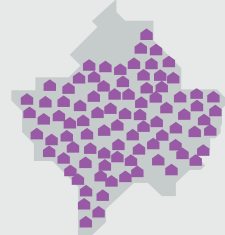


RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION



HOUSEHOLDS

360.718



POPULATION

1,739,825



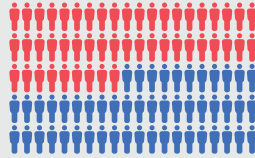
GENDER DISTRIBUTION

863,925

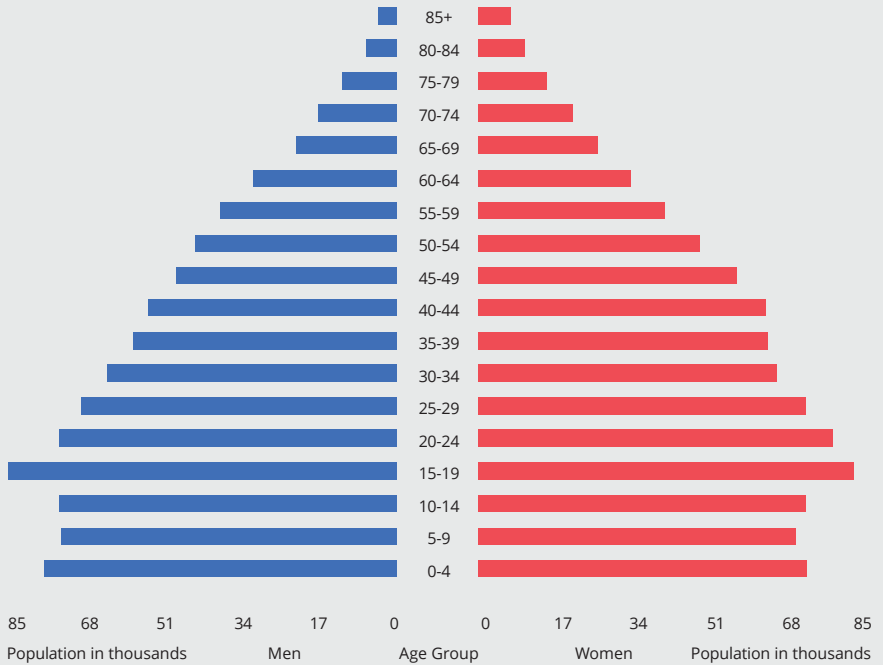
Women

875,900

Men



AGE STRUCTURE



GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

Kosovo is landlocked and located in the center of the Balkan Peninsula in South-eastern Europe. It has a total area of 10,908 square kilometers. Forests cover at least 39% of the country. Kosovo's biodiversity is conserved in two national parks, eleven nature reserves and 103 other protected areas. The Bjeshkët e Nemuna 'Accursed Mountains' and Sharr Mountains are the most important regions of vegetation and biodiversity inside Kosovo, and the mountainous west and southeast provide a great habitat for several rare or endangered animals.

Most of Kosovo experiences a continental climate with Mediterranean and alpine influences. The climate is strongly influenced by its proximity to the Adriatic Sea to the west and the Aegean Sea to the south but also European continental landmass to the north. The coldest areas of Kosovo are the mountains in the west and southeast, where an alpine climate is found. The warmest areas are mostly in the extreme southern areas close to the border with Albania, characterized by a Mediterranean climate. The northeast, the Kosovo Plain and Ibar Valley are influenced by continental air masses with colder winters and very hot summers. In the southwest, the climatic area of Dukagjini receives more Mediterranean influences with warmer summers and heavy snowfalls in the winter. The mountainous areas - the Bjeshkët e Nemuna 'Accursed Mountains' in the west, the Sharr mountains in the south and Kopaonik in the north - experience an alpine climate, with short and fresh summers and cold winters. ■

LOCATION

Southeast Europe



SURFACE AREA

10,908 km²



CAPITAL

Pristina

571.46 km²



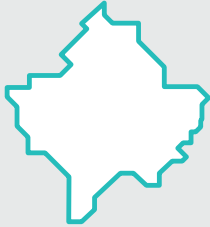
HOURS OF SUN
2066 hours



RAIN
760 mm



BORDERLINE
743.5 km



LONGEST RIVER
White Drin
122 km in Kosovo



FORESTED AREA
464,800 ha



HIGHEST MOUNTAIN
Gjeravica
2.656 m



THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

Form of government and the separation of powers • The Legislative Branch •
The Executive Branch • The Judicial Branch

by Jeta Krasniqi

*Project Manager and Senior Researcher at the Democratic Institute of Kosovo /
Transparency International Kosovo*

FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND THE SEPARATION OF POWERS

Kosovo is a democratic republic based on the separation of powers. The Assembly of Kosovo is the legislative institution; the President represents the unity of the people while the government exercises executive power and is subject to parliamentary control.

Kosovo has a multiethnic character which is represented by its national symbols, the flag, the seal and the anthem. There are two official languages: Albanian and Serbian, and the law indicates the instances when Turkish, Bosnian and Roma have the status of official languages at municipal level. Kosovo is a secular state.

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

PARLIAMENT

The Assembly is the legislative institution of the Republic of Kosovo and is directly elected by people of age eighteen and above. The Assembly is composed of 120 deputies for a period of four years, starting from the day of the constitutive session. Twenty out of the 120

seats are guaranteed for non-majority communities. A minimum of ten seats are guaranteed for representatives from the Kosovo Serb community. A minimum of ten further seats are guaranteed in total for other non-majority communities namely Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, ►



► Bosnian, Turk, and Gorani.

Every citizen of the Republic of Kosovo who is eighteen or older and meets the legal criteria is eligible to become a candidate for the Assembly. A member of the Assembly of Kosovo cannot hold any executive post in the public administration or in any publicly-owned enterprise nor exercise any other executive function.

The Assembly has a 30% gender quota which has resulted in greater representation of women in the Assembly. In the elections of 8 October 2019 only 13 out of 39 women MPs were elected through the quota system, marking significant progress.

The Assembly of Kosovo can adopt laws, resolutions and other general acts. The constitution (based on the Ahtisaari Plan) identifies some legislation as being of vital interest. Changing the nature of this legislation whether through amendment, repeal or adoption requires a 'double majority' of MPs: a majority of the MPs present and voting as well as a majority of non-majority communities' MPs present and voting.

The Assembly is also entitled to amend the Constitution by decision of two thirds of all its deputies including two thirds of all deputies holding seats reserved and guaranteed for representatives of communities that are not in the majority in Kosovo. This constitutional prerogative gives the power of veto to non-majority communities.

The Assembly ratifies international treaties and approves the budget of the Republic of Kosovo. It is the responsibility of the Assembly to elect or dismiss the President and deputy presidents of the Assembly; to elect or dismiss

the President of the Republic of Kosovo in accordance with this constitution and to elect the government or to express no confidence in it.

The Assembly oversees the work of the government and other public institutions that report to the Assembly, and it elects members of the Kosovo Judicial Council and the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, and proposes the judges for the Constitutional Court.

The meetings of the Assembly of Kosovo are public, but they can be closed upon the request of the President of the Republic of Kosovo, the Prime Minister or one third of the MPs. The decision must be adopted by two thirds of the vote of all MPs present and voting.

Parliamentary commissions are working organs of the Assembly where representatives of all parliamentary groups are present. The Assembly of Kosovo has four standing committees and ten functional committees. At the request of one third of the members of the Assembly, the Assembly may appoint a committee on a particular or investigative matter. At least one deputy chairperson of each parliamentary committee must be from a community that is different from that of the chairperson.

Parliament can be dissolved in a few cases such as when a government has not been formed sixty days after the appointment of the candidate for Prime Minister by the President. or the President can dissolve the Assembly after the passing of a vote of no confidence in the government. The members of the parliament themselves can vote in favor of dissolving the Assembly by two thirds of votes and the Assembly can be dissolved by the President by decree or if the President cannot be elected within sixty days from the start of his/ her election. ■



THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

THE PRESIDENT

The President of the Republic of Kosovo is the head of state and represents the unity of the people. The Constitution has given the right to any citizen of the Republic of Kosovo who is 35 years old or older to be elected the President of the country. The President is elected by the Assembly by a secret ballot. The candidate for the President should receive in advance at least thirty signatures of members of the Parliament and should be elected by a two thirds majority of all deputies of all the Assembly. The term of office is five years and the President can be elected for two terms. The President cannot exercise any other public function or exercise any political party functions.

The President of the Republic of Kosovo can, among other things, represent the Republic of Kosovo, internally and externally, and should guarantee the functioning of institutions according to the Constitution. S/he is the Commander-in-Chief of the Kosovo Security Force and leads the Consultative Council for Communities.

The President plays an important role in the constitutional functioning of institutions. The President is entitled to announce elections for the Assembly of Kosovo and convenes its first meeting. S/he issues decrees, promulgates laws approved by the Assembly of Kosovo, proposes amendments to the Constitution and signs international agreements. The President has the right to return adopted

laws for re-consideration, when s/he considers them to be harmful to the legitimate interests of the Republic of Kosovo or one or more communities. This right can be exercised only once per law.

The President appoints the candidate for Prime Minister for the establishment of the government after proposal by the political party or coalition holding the majority in the Assembly, and in the second round s/he has the discretion to mandate which political party/ coalition offers the second candidate for Prime Minister.

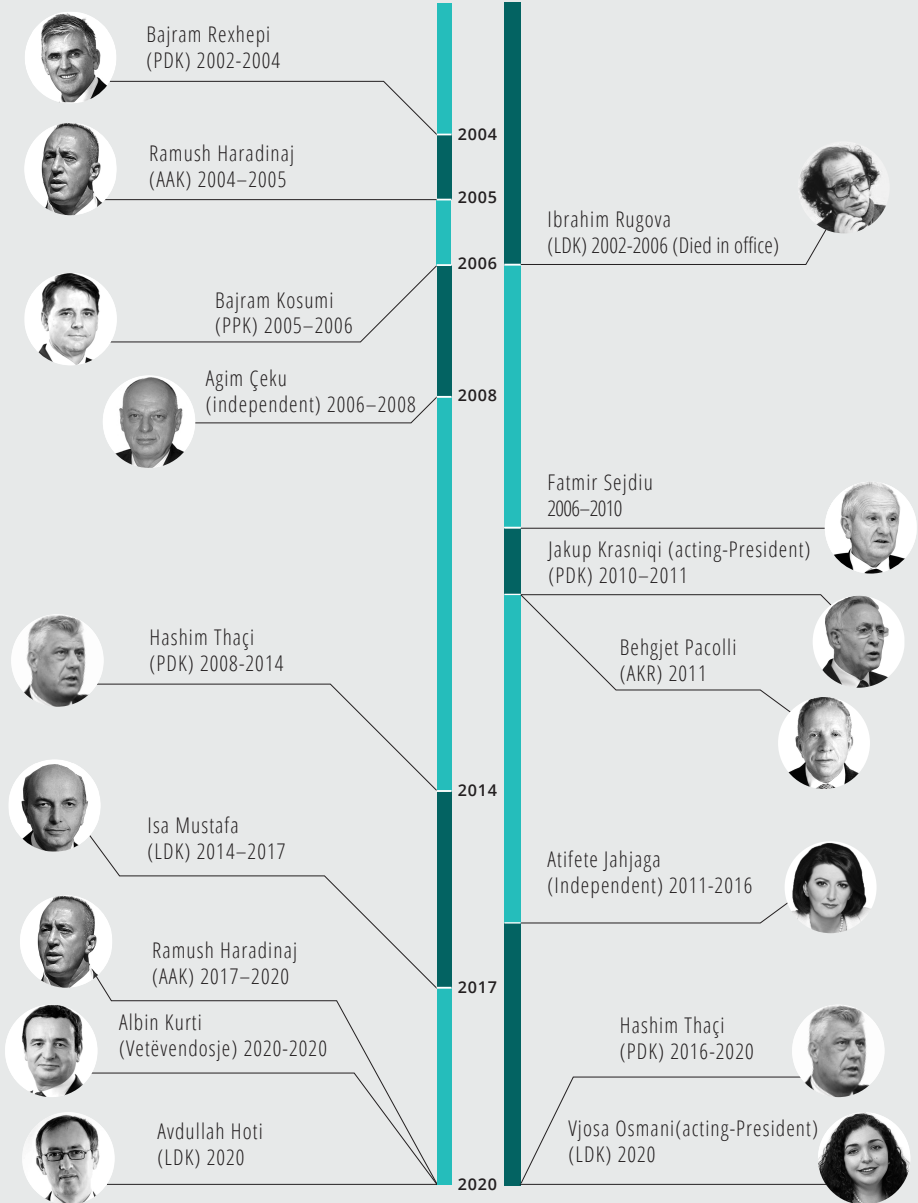
The President and the government share joint responsibilities in a few areas. On the recommendation of the government, the President appoints the Commander of the Kosovo Security Force, appoints and dismisses heads of Kosovo's diplomatic missions and can declare a state of emergency in consultation with the Prime Minister. Jointly with the Prime Minister, the President appoints the Director, Deputy Director and Inspector General of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency.

On the proposal of the institutions of the justice system the President can appoint or dismiss judges, prosecutors, the President of the Supreme Court and the Chief Prosecutor of Kosovo. The President also appoints Constitutional Court judges, upon the proposal of the Assembly. ■

State Presidents & Presidents of the Government

Presidents of the Government

State Presidents



THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

THE GOVERNMENT

The government exercises executive power and implements the laws and other acts adopted by the Assembly of Kosovo. The government has the power to propose draft laws and amendments of existing laws or give opinion on draft laws which are not proposed by it and also propose amendments to the Constitution. The government also has the power to propose and implement the internal and foreign policies of the state, propose the state budget and promote the economic development of the country. It oversees the work of the administration and guides the development of public services. The government also plays a role in supporting cultural initiatives from communities and their members. Moreover, through the Consultative Council for Communities, the government takes into consideration the comments of communities on legislative or policy initiatives and ensures regular exchange with communities.

The candidate for Prime Minister must, not later than fifteen days from their appointment by the President, present the composition of the government to the Assembly and request approval. For the government to be elected, it should receive the majority vote of all deputies of the Assembly of Kosovo. If the candidate does not present the composition of the government or it does not receive the

necessary votes for approval, the President will appoint another candidate within a period of ten days.

The government is elected by the Assembly, which also has the right to express a vote of no confidence. The Prime Minister may change any members of the government without the consent of the Assembly.

The Government is composed of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister(s) and ministers. Kosovo does not have a law on government; thus the size of the government is at the discretion of the governing coalition. Nevertheless, the Constitution stipulates clearly the division of ministers/ deputy ministers among different communities residing in Kosovo.

If the government is composed of twelve ministers, at least one minister should be from the Kosovo Serb community and one from other non-majority community. If the government is bigger, the Constitution indicates the proportion of ministers and deputy ministers which should be guaranteed for non-majority communities. The selection of these government representatives (ministers and deputy ministers) shall be determined after consultation with the group representing these respective communities.



The Prime Minister represents and leads the government, ensures the implementation of government policies by the relevant ministers

and, among other competences, is also entitled to appoint the General Director of the Police and to chair the Kosovo Security Council. ■

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

The judicial power is independent and exercised by the courts. In 2010 the Assembly of Kosovo

approved the Law on the Courts which changed the system of courts and prosecution offices. ■



THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

COURTS IN THE REPUBLIC

The court system in Kosovo is composed of basic courts, the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. There are seven principal seats of basic courts in Kosovo which are the courts of first instance. Each basic court can maintain branches of the court. The Court of Appeals which, in accordance with the Agreement on Justice between Kosovo and Serbia, has a division in North Mitrovica, operates as the second instance court. The Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority. The representation of non-majority communities is ensured in the justice system as the Constitution stipulates that at least 15% of the judges of the Supreme Court and not fewer than three shall be from non-majority communities. The same principle is applicable for judges from any other court.

The independence and impartiality of the justice system is ensured by the Kosovo Judicial Council which performs its functions as an independent institution.

The Constitutional Court is the final authority entitled to interpret the Constitution and whether laws are in compliance with the Constitution. The Assembly of Kosovo, the President of the country, the government and the Ombudsperson are authorized to refer to the Constitutional Court matters as set out in the Constitution. After exhausting all legal remedies set out in law even individuals are authorized to refer violations of their individual rights and freedoms as guaranteed by the Constitution. ■

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

THE STATE PROSECUTOR

The State Prosecutor in Kosovo is an independent institution which has the authority and responsibility to prosecute persons in breach of law. This institution reflects the multiethnic composition of the state of Kosovo and gender equality principles. Prosecutors have an initial mandate of three years which becomes permanent until retirement at reappointment. The Chief State Prosecutor has a mandate of seven years and cannot be reappointed. S/he is appointed and can be dismissed by the President upon the proposal of the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council. The State Prosecution organizational structure consists of the office of the Chief State Prosecutor, appellate prosecution, special prosecution and seven basic prosecutions, composed of general departments, the department for minors and the serious crimes prosecution department.

The Kosovo Prosecutorial Council is an independent institution which is entitled to ensure that all persons have access to justice. It is mandated to ensure that the State Prosecutor is independent, professional and impartial, reflecting the principles of the multiethnic nature of the Kosovo state and gender equality. ■

→ INTERNET

Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo
→ kuvendikosoves.org

President of the Republic of Kosovo
→ president-ksgov.net

The Prime Minister Office
→ kryeministri-ks.net

State Portal of the Republic of Kosovo
→ rks-gov.net

Kosovo Judicial Council
→ gjk-ks.org

Constitutional Court
→ gjk-ks.org

State Prosecutor
→ rks-gov.net/EN/f46/judiciary/state-prosecutor

FOREIGN POLICY

Historical background • Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 • European integration • Regional cooperation • SEECF • Kosovo in the Berlin Process • Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) • The EU-facilitated dialogue for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia • International organizations • Public diplomacy • Economic diplomacy • Digital diplomacy

by Valon Murtezaj

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More than a decade has passed since the Republic of Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008. Since then, Kosovo has moved forward, and there are results to be proud of both internally and in the international arena. In a rapidly changing world, Kosovo, the youngest state in Europe, is more internationally-oriented than ever.

The Republic of Kosovo belongs to Europe by virtue of its history, culture and geography. Kosovo's foreign policy is based on the European values embodied in its constitution. Kosovo

is strongly committed to the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo reflect the highest international standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The main goal of Kosovo's foreign policy is to strengthen its statehood internationally. For the Republic of Kosovo, European integration and strong partnership with the United States is at the very essence of its foreign policy. A world with the prospect of prosperity based on coop-



eration is the long-term orientation and central working principle of Kosovo's diplomacy.

With an active foreign policy, Kosovo aims to strengthen its position as a serious and respected actor in the international system. In this context, Kosovo foreign policy aims to promote and contribute to international peace and stability, democracy and human rights, and the rule of law.

Kosovo foreign policy is based on the belief that

it is essential for both the European Union and the United States to stand and work together, coordinated in supporting the Western Balkans with a clear European future by encouraging and supporting continued reforms and reconciliation in the region.

The beginnings of the foreign policy of the Republic of Kosovo are linked with the vision and work of Ibrahim Rugova, the ideator of independence and first president of the Republic of Kosovo. Under his leadership during the 1990s, ►

► the issue of Kosovo became known and internationalized. During the 'nineties the aim of foreign policy was to raise awareness among western democracies about the discrimination and apartheid implemented by the Serbian regime of Milošević.

Since its independence in 2008, Kosovo's foreign policy has been formulated and implemented by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Kosovo

implements an active foreign policy, which is in line with the dream of the people of Kosovo for Euro-Atlantic integration. That involves passionate engagement in strengthening relations with international partners, contributing to good neighborly relations. Finally, through its foreign affairs Kosovo promotes and contributes to world peace, and the principles of cooperation and mutual respect among states. ■

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

KOSOVO'S CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND ILLEGAL LOSS OF AUTONOMY IN 1989

The Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of 1974 brought republic status for Kosovo in all but name. When Yugoslavia broke up in 1991-1992, several republics declared their independence as separate states and the Republic of Kosovo is one of the seven states that emerged.

Before this, in 1989, the Milošević regime made destructive political changes which destroyed the autonomy of Kosovo. This step was part of an overall campaign to secure Serbia's domination over the Yugoslav Federation at that time. In March 1989, Serbia forced the Kosovo Assembly to accept changes in the Constitution,

removing Kosovo's autonomy. This was the starting point of a new era of the Milošević regime's oppression and brutality in Kosovo which ended with armed conflict in 1998-1999. More than 12 000 people were killed, and around 1 million deported out of Kosovo, while around 1600 persons are still missing. This led to the involvement of the international community in the Kosovo issue, and the application of the entire diplomacy arsenal of tools available, including NATO humanitarian military action against Serb Army and other military forces, to halt the violence and bring an end to the humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo. ■



KOSOVO'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN 2008

At an extraordinary meeting convened on 17 February 2008, the democratically elected representatives of the people of Kosovo declared Kosovo to be an independent and sovereign state. In the Declaration of Independence, it is noted that this act 'reflects the will of our people and is in full accordance with the recommendations of United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari and his Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement.' In 2010, the In-

ternational Court of Justice ruled that Kosovo's Declaration of Independence did not violate international law or UNSC1244.

Today, the Republic of Kosovo is an independent state. Kosovo is currently recognized as a sovereign and independent state by 116 states from all continents. These states include all neighboring countries, except Serbia. ■



EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The Republic of Kosovo belongs to Europe, by virtue of its history, culture and geography. Kosovo and its people believe in the European Union (EU). Like its neighbors in the Western Balkans, Kosovo enjoys the prospect of a European future in the framework of the EU's enlargement processes. The prospect of EU membership for all Western Balkans countries was reaffirmed at the European Council in Thessaloniki in June 2003. EU heads of state have consistently supported a European path for the region.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) entered into force in April 2016 as a comprehensive contract between Kosovo and the

European Union (EU). The SAA serves as a guide for Kosovo's European integration process by identifying necessary political, economic and legal reforms. The government of the Republic of Kosovo is the central national institution for fulfilling the obligations arising from the SAA.

There are two interrelated documents with the aim of implementing all reforms for the adoption of the *EU acquis* into national legislation in all its chapters: the National Program for Implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, and the European Reform Agenda, setting out political-level priorities and concrete reforms for their implementation. ■

REGIONAL COOPERATION

It is among the core pillars of Kosovo's foreign policy to promote regional cooperation and to engage as a factor for stability in the region. Regional cooperation and good neighborly relations are essential for progress on the Western Balkans countries' respective European paths. The European Commission has declared regional cooperation in the Western Balkans to be a key condition for joining the EU. Recognizing this regional cooperation and good neighborly relations as important prerequisites for joining the European Union, the Kosovo government

has, via its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, put these among its foreign policy priorities.

Kosovo is a member of several important regional initiatives where it contributes actively within their respective structures with the aim that the benefits of regional cooperation will ultimately reflect on the lives of its citizens. Kosovo's foreign policy has consistently contributed to the creation of a regional culture which recognizes constructive dialogue among neighboring countries, based on mutual respect and recognition. ■

SEECF

The South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECF) was launched in 1996 in Sofia with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation, trust, good neighbourly relations, stability, security, economic relations, engagement in the human dimension, justice, the fight against organ-

ized crime, and the fight against terrorism.

At the Bucharest Summit in 2014, Kosovo joined this important regional political process, and during Kosovo chaired the SEECF from 2019-2020. ■

KOSOVO IN THE BERLIN PROCESS

Since 2014 the Western Balkans' Berlin Process, initiated by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, served as a framework for regional cooperation and as a new European political process in the region. The process has been fully

supported by other EU members states (Austria, Croatia, France, Italy, and Slovenia). Also part of the process were EU institutions such as the European Commission, and international financial institutions. ►

► Kosovo's foreign policy fully supported and contributed to this framework that included regional cooperation, sustainable economic growth, democracy, and reconciliation. Kosovo's foreign policy contributed substantively to this idea of building peace and prosperity for the region while offering a clear European future.

Kosovo will develop reconciliation and an environment with adequate infrastructure for creating jobs and business opportunities, and to en-

sure implementation of youth and education activities.

As an important mechanism developed during the WB process is Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO). Its main role is to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through youth exchange programs. Kosovo chaired the governing board of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office in 2019. ■

REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL (RCC)

Kosovo participated actively in the RCC's work on regional cooperation and the Euro-Atlantic integration of the South-East European participants. It is the mission of the RCC to foster connectivity, skills and mobility, competitiveness, the rule of law and security cooperation efforts

among its members, and Kosovo has played a valued role in further developing the forms of regional cooperation. Kosovo was a constructive actor in all political consultations within the RCC framework and in implementing regionally-agreed agendas. ■

THE EU-FACILITATED DIALOGUE FOR THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA

The aim of the EU-facilitated dialogue for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia is to promote cooperation between the two countries, help them achieve progress on

the path to Europe and improve the lives of the people. The Republic of Kosovo is an independent state since 17 February 2008. ■



INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

Multilateralism and membership to international organizations remains a strategic interest for Kosovo. The rationale is two-fold: on the one hand this will strengthen the international recognition of Kosovo as a state, while on the other hand Kosovo wants to contribute constructively in the international arena.

The Republic of Kosovo is a member of more than eighty international organizations. These are regional, conventions, and other multilateral mechanisms. Kosovo is also a member of more than thirty sports organizations. Kosovo has also become a full sovereign member of international agencies such as the World Bank, Inter- ▶

► national Monetary Fund (IMF), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and other international bodies such as the International Olympic Committee, FIFA and the Union of European Football Associations, UEFA.

On a larger scale, it is the objective of Kosovo to become a member of the United Nations, EU, Council of Europe, Interpol, UNESCO and other important European and global organizations. ■

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

In today`s world, technology changes and economic development suggest an implementation of an active public diplomacy. As a result, Kosovo, introduced public diplomacy as an important instrument of foreign policy.

Through implementing the principle of dialogue, Kosovo public diplomacy aims to spread sincere and trustworthy information about Kosovo. Kosovo foreign policy is interested in advancing its national interests through events, activities and actions, both locally and interna-

tionally, which go beyond the classic diplomacy of verbal notes.

Since declaring its independence, Kosovo public diplomacy has been used to find and develop routes to build the nation's branding and image. Promotion of tourism and exports (products and services), government policies, and attracting foreign investment are among the key arenas where Kosovo public diplomacy has been focused, as well a in cultural diplomacy in the fields of arts and science. ■

ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

Economic development is among the top priorities of the Republic of Kosovo. For many years, promoting economic interests has been among the top strategic objectives of Kosovo's

foreign policy. Kosovo economic diplomacy aims to integrate Kosovo into the markets of developing countries, with participation in international economic and financial organizations, encour-



agement to invest in Kosovo, and increased exports of Kosovan products.

The free market economy is the foundation for the economic development and the welfare of businesses in Kosovo. Through economic diplomacy, Kosovo aims to internationalize Kosovan businesses and attract foreign investment. Through its economic diplomacy, Kosovo's foreign policy has aimed at creating a favorable framework for both domestic

and international companies to do business. In this context, strengthening the cooperation with the EU to promote the interests of Kosovo's businesses remains at the focus of Kosovo's economic diplomacy initiatives and activities.

Finally, economic diplomacy is being used in conjunction with public diplomacy as a successful tool in developing Kosovo's national branding as a good place to be and to invest. ■

DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Digital diplomacy is among the priorities of Kosovo diplomacy. It is an instrument and strategy for strengthening Kosovo's overall online presence. This strategy encompasses a comprehensive and

diversified portfolio of initiatives. It is Kosovo's aim to become recognized as a leading country in the application of digital technology in all foreign affairs and activities. ■

BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

The legislative framework for doing business in Kosovo • Taxes • The Kosovo economy

by Naim Huruglica, MBA
Senior business consultant and lecturer

Kosovo is a transit point between Balkan countries. The fundamental values of doing business in Kosovo are those of the competitive and free market, where Kosovars and foreigners have the same rights to own businesses and property, and they are treated as equal entities.

In this section, the focus will be on the legislative framework for doing business in Kosovo and the economy of Kosovo.

THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK OF DOING BUSINESS IN KOSOVO

Kosovo is a parliamentary democracy and its core values are derived from its constitution. Based on the constitution foreigners, as well as citizens of Kosovo, have the right to operate and open businesses in Kosovo and enjoy the same treatment. In accordance with the constitution as well as national legislation, no person can be deprived of their property or any of the rights which derive from it. Foreign investors can operate businesses and own property in Kosovo conform legal laws in force.

The Law on Business Organizations is the

primary legal act which regulates businesses and their operations in Kosovo. It defines company types as well as the procedures and regulations for their incorporation and operations.

According to the Law on Business Organizations, companies can be registered as separate legal entities that operate independently with corporate shields. The law recognizes nine different types of businesses:

1. Individual business.
2. General partnership.



3. Partnership.
4. Limited Liability Company (L.L.C).
5. Joint Stock Company (J.S.C.).
6. Foreign Company.
7. Socially-owned enterprise.
8. Public enterprise.
9. Agricultural cooperative.

Based on the Law on Business Organizations, the central authority for business registration is the Kosovo Business Registration Agency (KBRA). This agency is responsible for all registration procedures for opening a company in Kosovo. Registration can be conducted electronically or in person, and registration can take place at the main office in Pristina/ Prishtina or at the offices of any municipality in Kosovo, in each of which KBRA has its own offices.

Kosovo has introduced a unique individual business registration number which simplifies the registration process and avoids the need for further registration with the tax authorities.

Kosovo has adopted two key laws regarding investments: The Law on Foreign Investment and the Law on Strategic Investments.

According to the **Law on Foreign Investment**, the Republic of Kosovo treats foreign investors equally, irrespective of their nationality, origin, residence, the place where the business was established or its management. Foreign investors and their investments have rights and obligations which are the same as those of the citizens of Kosovo, in accordance with the country's applicable laws.

The **Law on Strategic Investments** allows investors to accelerate the registration procedures for investments with national and strategic interest. This law identifies specific conditions (the value of the investment, creation of new jobs etc.) which foreign investments need to fulfil in order to be classified as strategic investment. Once a foreign investor is qualified as a strategic investor, they are entitled to direct negotiation with the government with the aim of facilitating the implementation of a project.

The government is determined to expand the existing Industrial Development Zones, but is also working on opening new Zones. Foreign investors enjoy benefits in these zones such as symbolic fee leasing of space, infrastructure and utilities. ■



TAXES

Kosovo has established a fiscal system based on EU experiences and best practice in order to have fiscal policies and laws as close as possible to those of the EU. There are several taxes in

Kosovo, such as Value Added Tax, income tax, corporate tax, and property tax. There are three entities that collect taxes in Kosovo:

TAX TYPE	TAX COLLECTOR
Value Added Tax (VAT) Personal income tax Corporate tax Pension	Tax Administration of Kosovo
Customs tax Excise VAT on import	Kosovo Customs
Property tax	Local municipal authorities

Tax rates are the lowest in Europe. Corporate tax is at a flat rate of 10% while income tax starts at 0% for incomes up to 900 euro annually and ends at 10% for incomes over 5400 euro annually. Pension contributions are 10%, 5% paid by

the employee and the other 5% by the employer. Kosovo is the only country in Europe with a 0% dividend tax rate and most raw materials, equipment and machinery are customs- and VAT-exempted. ■

TYPE OF TAX	TAX RATE
Value Added Tax (VAT)	General rate 18%, preferential rate 0% and 8%
Corporate tax	10%
Property tax	0.15 - 0.2%
Personal income tax	0 - 10%
Dividend tax	0%

THE KOSOVO ECONOMY

Kosovo suffered from the economic damage caused by the war in 1999. In the last decade, Kosovo has been developing steadily, with the greatest contribution being from the service, agriculture, and financial sectors. Kosovo's GDP growth rate in the past 10 years has been over 3.5% on average, with fiscal discipline as established by international financial institutions.

The following are important features of the Kosovan economy:

1. Kosovo has the lowest public debt in Europe, which accounts for around 17% of GDP.
2. Kosovo has adopted the euro as its currency, which has avoided the risk of currency fluctuation and attracted more foreign investments.
3. Kosovo's large diaspora in western European countries has contributed significantly by sending remittances, enabling an inflow of cash and goods into the economy.
4. Kosovo's inflation rate has been relatively stable, standing at around 2%, which is in line with the policies of the European Central Bank.
5. Exports of goods from Kosovo have been increasing, which has enabled a narrowing of the trade deficit.
6. Kosovo has a young population that represents great potential for labor. Kosovo's youth is a potential source of human capital for European companies that operate in the Balkans.
7. The GDP of Kosovo is 7.94 billion USD, as of 2019.
8. The unemployment rate in Kosovo is around 30%.
9. Kosovo trades with countries of the region as well as EU members, particularly with Austria, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. Kosovo is part of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and has entered into Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, which enable the export of Kosovan products to these countries free of taxes. Kosovo enjoys free access to the markets of Japan, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and the USA due to the preferential trade treatment these countries offer Kosovo products. ■

THE IMPERMANENCE OF A PERMANENT PEACE

by Dritan Dragusha

Journalist, author and TV Host of "Prizma"

On the basis of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, as the highest legal act in the country, and specifically in Article 8, the Republic of Kosovo is presented as a secular state, neutral in matters of religious belief, and under Article 9 ensures the preservation and protection of its cultural and religious heritage. In addition to such constitutional norms, the Republic of Kosovo has also incorporated documents and conventions of a universal character guaranteeing freedoms and the right to religion, belief and free expression. Thus, on this legal basis, we can say that Kosovo has a liberal constitutional regulation in relation to the various religious denominations that coexist in our society. What characterizes Kosovo in this regard is that some of the great monotheistic religions coexist here. The vast majority of Kosovars are Muslim, with much smaller groups of Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians. At the same time, there are groups of other faiths, as well as atheists.

A number of different ethnic groups, such as Albanians, Ashkali, Bosnians, Croats, Egyptians,

Gorani, Montenegrins, Roma, Serbs, Turks, etc., live in Kosovo, and as a result the Republic of Kosovo, through its constitution, presents the state of Kosovo and its society as a multiethnic society in Article 3 [Equality before the Law], Point 1. All these social stratifications have historically coexisted in tolerance. Of course, Kosovan society is not static; it is very dynamic and sporadically there have been isolated disagreements and conflicts, which have occurred mainly as a result of external influences, rather than due to any internal hatred.

Given that geographically the Republic of Kosovo lies on the edge of Southeast Europe, this area has often been the theater of various clashes. Perhaps not coincidentally, historians point out that this geographical area is also the boundary between the East and the West. We even encounter the expressions of these two cultures (Western and Eastern) in the architecture still standing in these spaces. We have religious sites, such as mosques, *hammams* and residential houses from the Ottoman period, but we also ►





► have Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian sites, all the way from Roman times to the Austro-Hungarian period. It should not be forgotten that the peoples who lived on these lands in antiquity were pagan societies, and even today there are many symbols or social events that still carry elements of paganism, and perhaps this is the reason for such interfaith tolerance.

Based on 2017 statistics, Kosovo has 800 mosques, 150 Orthodox churches, 50 Roman Catholic churches, and 24 Protestant churches. There are also the traces of a variety of religions and their number and diversity make Kosovan society very attractive, and Kosovo a very interesting place. It is of interest to note that in Kosovo the various religious holidays are observed ceremonially and joyously not only by the clergy, but also across Kosovan society. Regardless of which religion they belong to, during the holidays people in Kosovo congratulate each other and express solidarity.

However, Kosovo and its people are not immune to developments taking place in Eu-

rope and beyond. Therefore, current events fueled by religion and radicalism, and the resulting rise of the extreme right and other segregating expressions, have had and still have a great impact on Kosovan society. In addition, Kosovan society is still isolated (for various political reasons, both external and internal), and Kosovars enjoy little freedom of movement, as Kosovo does not yet have visa liberalization, and this creates fertile ground for religious ideologies and destructive politics to indoctrinate people, especially young people. Thus, peace and tolerance are not to be taken for granted, but they are states that must be permanently cultivated and for this, every individual, every religion, every politician and political party has a responsibility. Every society has a responsibility too, because, as we have seen in recent years, the negative events that take place in a given country or society will not necessarily affect other countries or societies. Therefore, living for peace and in peace requires daily work. The day we stop working on this will be the last day of peace and the beginning of a negative period for everyone. ■

KOSOVO'S CONNECTION WITH THE DIASPORA

by Liza Gashi

Founder of GERMIN (www.germin.org)

During the Kosovo War in 1999, over 700 000 ethnic Albanians, around 100 000 ethnic Serbs and more than 40 000 Bosniaks were forced out of Kosovo to neighboring countries, including Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. After the United Nations took over administration of Kosovo following the war, many of the Albanian refugees returned. The largest diaspora communities of Kosovar Albanians are in Germany and Switzerland, amounting to 200 000 individuals in each country, or 20% of Kosovo's resident population.

Due to growing potential, countries across the globe are exploring ways to rekindle the connection of their diasporas with their homeland. In the case of Kosovo, studies suggest that every third household in Kosovo has at least one family member living abroad. It is estimated that over 800 000 people live outside of Kosovo. 98% of migrants have legal status in their country of residence and 89% are believed to have full-time jobs. Some of the most common destinations for emigrants from Kosovo are Ger-

many, Switzerland, Austria, France, the UK, and the US.

During the struggles of the 'eighties and 'nineties, the diaspora was very involved in the affairs of Kosovo and alleviated many of the hardships. Moreover, the Kosovo diaspora has been and continues to be a great contributor to the economy of the country mostly through remittances (15% of GDP), but to a lesser extent through investments and the circulation of talent. The Kosovo diaspora is geographically widespread and heterogeneous. These are people of various ages, different professions, and different generations of migration and they present different motivations and reasons to stay connected to Kosovo. Since Kosovo's diaspora is concentrated mainly in countries of the western hemisphere, they are to a large extent attuned to new tools of communication and technology.

Hence, in the youngest republic in Europe, there are great opportunities for the diaspora to become a powerful voice for their political, social, and economic rights through ►

► modern technologies and informal channels for collective advocacy. The United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda has stressed the importance of harnessing the contributions of transnational migrants. To this end, for example, the diaspora-focused NGO, Germin, aims to engage the diaspora beyond remittances and into policy-making, social innovation, market linkages, business and economic engagement, philanthropy and the institutional framework, striving to explore ICT channels to better facilitate and

strengthen linkages between the diaspora, citizens, and governments in the Western Balkans.

With the advancement of technology, it is much easier now to know and recognize the diaspora, and to mobilize them to remain engaged with their homeland. This does not need to start from scratch, as there are many great examples to be followed, including Armenia, India, Israel, and Slovenia. Among the majority-Albanians states in the Balkan





Peninsula, Kosovo was the first to establish a Ministry of the Diaspora, later renamed as the Ministry of Diaspora and Strategic Investments, and now as a part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. There has now been a shift in institutional focus to the economic side of diaspora engagement. This is also noted in the latest Kosovo Strategy for the Diaspora. In Kosovo's Diaspora Strategy and other official documents, Kosovo recognizes the economic potential that needs to be put into the service of the country's development.

While the Albanian government has organized two sessions of a Diaspora Summit, the Kosovo government has organized only Diaspora Economic Conferences and similar economic-related networking events with diaspora businesses. The former Ministry of Diaspora and Strategic Investments of Kosovo has also initiated and facilitated the creation of Albanian Diaspora Business Net-

works, aiming to connect diaspora businesses and create joint partnerships between them, to invest in Kosovo.

Despite the establishment of institutional mechanisms, Kosovo has not been clear on what it wants beyond calling on diaspora businesses to invest in the homeland while remittances generally go on consumables rather than investment.

A good sign is that the economic-focused view of the diaspora shows that Kosovo does not see emigration only as a loss, but also as an advantage that could be a bridge for cooperation and development. However, there is plenty of space to further advance and strengthen the relationship between the homeland and diaspora communities. Nevertheless, this needs a serious approach with a clear strategy and commitment, first from homeland institutions, and then from diaspora communities. ■

CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

Freedom of religion • Civil society • Migration

by Florina Duli Sefaj

Country Director-Terre des Hommes, Kosovo

Member of the Kosovo Stability Initiative Board of Directors

Article 44 of the Kosovo Constitution and Law No. 06/L-043, on Freedom of Association in Non-governmental Organizations guarantee freedom of association in Kosovo. This freedom is practiced through a range of organized forms of democratic action, manifested through organized groups such as non-governmental organizations, community groups, labor unions, people's movements, faith-based organizations, professional associations, foundations, think tanks, charitable organizations, and other not-for-profit organizations. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can be formally registered as foundations, associations or think tanks, but the Kosovo legal system also enables the functioning of non-registered, ad hoc or long-term issue-based groups such as environment protection groups (e.g. the Citizens Group for Protection of Badovc Lake), gender equality groups (such as Marshojmë s'festojmë), or the NGO and labor union Coa-

lition for Social Justice, etc., and the trend in the establishment of such groups is growing. Given that direct economic activity of NGOs is not allowed, recent regulation enabled social enterprises, as another form of association into a not-for-profit legal entity, which can generate their own funds to operate in Kosovo.

Association into Labor Unions is also guaranteed by Article 44.2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo as well as Law No. 04/L-011 on Organizing Trade Unions in Kosovo. The Law does not make membership in labor unions mandatory. Although the labor unions are independent by law, in practice they are quite dependent on public institutions given that they are only prevalent in the public sector. The presence of the labor unions in the private sector is very thin, because the Kosovo economy is dominated by small businesses, with numbers of employees be- ▶



► low the legal threshold of 50 that makes the establishment of a union mandatory. A collective bargaining agreement between the government, labor unions, and private sector representatives was signed in 2014. A Tripartite Socio-Economic Council is mandated with social dialogue by law. Employers on the other hand are organized in Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations.

Kosovo is characterized by a very vibrant civil society sector which enjoys a very positive public image. The image is attributed to the current performance of NGOs, but also to the role of NGOs that were established in the 'nineties, taking up the role of public safety net and health care system across Kosovo, when such public services were inaccessible to most Kosovo Albanians. At the time, human rights groups (such as the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Free-

doms) and the Mother Teresa Society had constituency bases across the country of over 40 000 volunteers each. Gender-based organizations such as Motrat Qiriazhi, and the Center for Protection of Mothers and Children were among the first NGOs to register in Kosovo.

Over the last two decades, around 10 000 NGOs have registered in Kosovo. Out of this number, only around 3000 NGOs are functional and active. However, the total number of registered NGOs includes sports clubs and federations.

Activism and citizen protests, marches and rallies are commonplace in Kosovo, with street protests often yielding quick public institution responses. The right to protest and to assemble is also guaranteed by the Kosovo Constitution.



Thematically, civil society organizations (CSOs) cover activities including policy and governance, service delivery, human rights, health care and services, education, infrastructure and economic development, entrepreneurship, initiatives protecting the environment, culture, youth, sports, innovation, and many others. However, with local philanthropy not yet developed, most NGOs - with the exception of licensed service providers - are dependent on international donors and foundations.

The Government of Kosovo developed a Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society 2013-2017. The strategy was reviewed and, based on the review findings, a new Cooperation Strategy for 2019-2023 was developed and adopted. The purpose of these two Strategies was to create a more enabling legal, institutional and financial framework for the cooperation between government and civil society, as one of the essential indicators of good, open and transparent standards of governance for a modern democracy, as well as to empower civil society to participate in the policy-making process, deliver better quality services and ensure un-biased monitoring of policy implementation. ■

KOSOVO AS A COUNTRY OF RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE

Freedom of religion • Civil society • Migration

by Nita Luci

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Co-Chair University Program for Gender Studies and Research*

Kosovo has rich cultural heritage that not only dates to prehistoric times, but is found expressed in creative, dynamic and diverse contemporary socio-cultural practices and locations. The architectural, aesthetic, and historical tangible and intangible heritage found throughout Kosovo speaks to its complex history, large-scale political and cultural transformations, and an ongoing and vigorous interest by citizens to engage with spaces of heritage.

The past thirty years, first of violence and dislocation, but also abounding creative production, followed by state-building and international interventions, have left lasting marks on Kosovo's cultural heritage. Whereas many sites of cultural heritage have fallen into disarray, and digitization is in its infancy, governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations and independent citizen actions have begun vying for in-

creased preservation and education. In 2017, the Kosovo Government adopted a ten-year National Strategy on Cultural Heritage that seeks to preserve and promote cultural heritage on the basis of sustainable economic, social and cultural development. Organizations such as Cultural Heritage Without Borders in Kosovo continue restoration and engagement of the public in support of rights to cultural heritage and creative industry. Ec Ma Ndryshe continues to monitor, report and define possibilities for urban planning that places citizens and cultural and natural heritage at the center. At the same time, archaeologists and scholars, but also artists and activists, research, collect, disseminate, archive, and engage through traditional methods and new digital technologies to make cultural heritage relevant to the public interest. A short and in no way all-encompassing list includes Oral History Kosovo – online collection of life stories intersecting with the ►



- ▶ broader history of Kosovo and the world; the Rilindja Archive - a digital collection of Kosovo's first daily newspaper; the Vushtrri Fortress – restoration of the archaeological site dating to the seventh century; the Hari-laq Fortress – excavation of a 4-6th century site; the Museum of Education – an online platform of 1990s segregated parallel education; Lirindja zine - 1980s BOOM concerts showcasing part of Kosovo rock music heritage, and graphic short stories, poems and essays interrogating ideas of home.

Perhaps the most ubiquitous institution for its role in the preservation, protection and presentation of cultural heritage is the **National Museum of Kosovo**, located in the capital, Pristina/ Prishtina. Established in 1949 and housed in a late nineteenth-century building of Austro-Hungarian architecture, the National Museum has a collection of over 50 000 artefacts in its archaeological, historical, ethnographic, and nature pavilions. A significant part of the museum's collection, over 2000 artefacts (archaeolog-

ical and cultural/ historical) from the Kosovo's Archaeological Treasure exhibition. is currently kept illegally at the National and Ethnological Museums in Belgrade. Adjacent to the National Museum is the **Archaeological Park** (or *Lapidarium*) which showcases antiquities in its permanent exhibition and includes a small amphitheater and exhibition space for cultural and educational activities, especially catering to youth and children.

Another part of the museum complex is the **Ethnological Museum Emin Gjiku**. Recently listed among the most interesting city museums in Europe it offers a permanent exhibition that fuses the lived and experiential with the materiality of culture. Located in two preserved Ottoman houses from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the museum exhibition is built around the themes of birth, life, and death, where the beliefs and values that have guided cultural practices and rituals are animated in the carefully curated narrative of the museum.





The Ulpiana Archaeological Park – among hundreds of archaeological sites dating to the stone and iron ages, and more visible in the Ancient Greek, Roman, and Byzantine localities – is one of the most impressive and better restored archaeological sites in Kosovo. For over sixty years, Ulpiana has been a location of excavations and study by local and international scholars and students, and more recently the site has opened to the public. Showing traces of human habitation since the Neolithic continuing to the Bronze and Iron Age, Ulpiana became an urbanized center several decades after the invasion of the Dardanian Kingdom by the Romans at the end of the first century AD. The urbanized and fortified city of Ulpiana was founded and named by the Roman Emperor Marcus ULPIUS Traianus (98-117), when it also gained the status of a Municipal (Municipium Ulpianum). It reached the height of its development between the third and fourth centu-

ries AD, transforming into a significant political, economic and cultural center. *Municipium Ulpiana Splendidissima* was characterized by a network of roads - *Cardo Maximus* and *Decumanus* - an orthogonal urban system, water supply, residential buildings and public, sacral, profane and utilitarian structures. It was a center of metallurgical, artisanal, trade and agricultural importance during the first five centuries of the first millennium, and an important religious center during the rule of the emperor Justinian in the sixth century when it was rebuilt and renamed *Justiniana Secunda*. During the period of Roman dominion (first to fourth century AD) and Byzantine rule (fourth to sixth century AD) Ulpiana was one of the main connecting centers between Constantinople and Rome, intersecting roads that connected the Adriatic Sea with the Aegean and indirectly the Black Sea. In 1993, evidence of trade extending to Haifa (Caesarea) in Israel was found in lead ingots ►

- ▶ (rods) with the engraving Met(alli) Dard(anici) believed to be from the Ulpiana mines.

Kosovo's cultural-religious heritage is perhaps most widely known as a site of political tensions, often overshadowing the rich social history, artistic and spiritual relevance of these sites to various communities. Currently there are almost 2000 heritage sites under temporary protection in Kosovo and only 23 under permanent protection.

Early Christian, Medieval and Ottoman heritage abounds throughout Kosovo. Such is the **Gracanica Monastery**, a Serbian Orthodox monastery built by King Stefan Milutin in 1321, on the ruins of a sixth-century basilica. In 2006 it was placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, and as an extension of the Decan Monastery site placed on the UNESCO

List of World Heritage in Danger. In Prizren, the Our Lady of Ljeviš church is located in the city's historical center. It was rebuilt by King Milutin in 1306/7 but it is assumed that the church was built over a fifth-sixth century early Christian church and Byzantine basilica from the ninth century. After the fall of Prizren to the Ottoman Empire in 1455, it was renamed Xhuma Xhami) and given the status of mosque by Sultan Mehmet II. In 2006, it was also placed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger.

In recent years, independent and civil society initiatives have also turned to preserving Kosovo's more recent historical heritage. Artistic and multi-media productions surrounding **modernist and socialist architecture and art**, as well as 1990s social, cultural and political activism and resistance, have





animated the interest of local and international scholars and publics. This interest has in part been sparked by continued failures to protect, or projects that undermined the architectural and aesthetic, as well as urban, creation of the socialist period, as well as the legacy of the 1990s peaceful civic resistance in Kosovo. Specifically, several buildings characterized by their **brutalist and socialist-realist aesthetics** have been lost, such as the façade of the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering, designed by Slovenian architect Edvard Ravinkar; the Rilindja (publishing house) building, designed by Georgi Konstantinovski; and the Kosovo Assembly building which was designed by Juraj Naidhardt, Le Corbusier's assistant. However, three cinemas, relevant to the artistic and cultural memory of the cities where they are located, are now under protection and run independently in collaboration with local public institutions. **Kino Armata**, located in the center of Pristina/ Prishtina, adjacent to what was initially the administrative building of the Yugoslav Army, followed by the United

Nations Mission in Kosovo administration in the early 2000s, hosts an artistic and cultural program including film screenings. **Kino Jusuf Gërvalla**, in Peć/ Peja, and **Cinema Lumbardhi**, located in the historic center of Prizren, are both movie theaters run by CSOs which together with citizens prevented municipal plans for demolition and repurposing. Both are used for varied cultural, artistic and public events, and serve as spaces that can create new and inclusive sites for heritage protection and promotion.

Despite the continued politicization of heritage, or perhaps because of it, strides have been made to protect as well as expand the scope of cultural heritage protection and promotion. While Kosovo faces many challenges in bringing to life its heritage strategy and would be greatly aided if its UNESCO membership application were to be approved, Kosovo citizens, and its institutions, continue to engage and commit to inclusive, participatory and creative solutions for Kosovo's rich cultural heritage. ■

MIGRATION

by Tahir Latifi, PhD

Professor of anthropology

Kosovo's household economy has been dependent on remittances from family members living and working abroad since the 1960s. That time was the first wave of migrants when the main destinations were Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, and the Scandinavian countries. The first wave of emigrants were mostly young men Gastarbeiter (guest worker) unskilled workers, working mainly in unqualified jobs.

This situation continued until the 1980s when a new phase of migrations began after Tito's death, and Albanian demonstrations in 1981. Political turmoil caused a new wave of emigrants which, unlike the first wave, included emigrants from urban areas, students, educated and skilled workers. Because many of them had taken part in, or in some way had supported the 1981 demonstrations, many of them became targets of political persecution and had been arrested by the Yugoslav regime. In order to avoid or escape political persecution, these people migrated to west-

ern countries. Thus, besides the economic reasons which were distinctive for the first wave of migrants, many of these emigrants left the country for political reasons.

The third wave of emigration began at the outset of the 1990s. In March 1989 the Serbian regime abolished Kosovo's autonomy, and in the aftermath the repressive regime of Slobodan Milošević initiated a forced mass dismissal of hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanians from their workplaces. Having no chance of getting other work, many of those who were dismissed from their jobs emigrated to western and northern European countries, and even to the USA, Canada and Australia. Many of them were young, and their aim was not only to find a better life and work there, but many from the younger group were required to be recruited in the Yugoslav (Serbian-dominated) army just as war was beginning in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This wave escalated in 1998-1999 during the war in Kosovo. ►



► This was the time of the exodus (fourth wave) when about 1 million Kosovo Albanians were displaced from their homes. About 800 000 were deported to Albania and North Macedonia, and the rest within Kosovo. Many of those who fled to Albania and Macedonia subsequently emigrated to Western countries.

The fifth wave started after the end of 1998-1999 war, from 2000 until present. Now, the main reasons for emigration were different: reuniting families, as well as unemployment and poverty.

The recent years have marked an increasing intensity of emigration, especially between the end of 2014 and spring 2015. In this pe-

riod more than 119 000 people emigrated. In general, from 2013 to 2017 around 173 288 people emigrated, while 47 354 immigrated, meaning a net emigration of 125 934 inhabitants.

From 1969 to 2011, the number of emigrants and those of Kosovo descent was estimated to be 703 978, while in 2018 the number increased to 854 198. Previously it was estimated that one third of Kosovo's population lived abroad, but due to the increasing number of migrants in these last years, it seems that the numbers go beyond that. Based on 2011 census data, the preferred country for emigration was Germany, followed by Switzerland (see Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of Kosovo migrants according to leading countries of destination. Census 2011. Source. Kosovan Migration (KAS 2014)

European countries	Percentage
Germany	35.25
Switzerland	22.94
Italy	7.26
Austria	5.61
Sweden	5.14
USA	3.53
France	3.25
England	2.79
Belgium	2.07
Slovenia	1.78
Other	10.38

Even though almost a decade has passed since the last census, the leading countries of migrant destinations are almost the same. Based on the total number of Schengen visas

issued for Kosovars in the years 2013-2017, it seems that Germany and Switzerland are still the preferred countries for migration (see Table 2).

Table 2. Statistics for Schengen Visas (2013-2017). Source: Profil i zgjeruar i migrimet 2013-2017

Country	Number of issued visas
Germany	90 137
Switzerland	81 552
Italy	21 040
Greece	21 575
Slovenia	11 907
Hungary	9 043
Other countries	21 423
Total	256 677

It should be mentioned that the number of visas issued is not only for those who emigrated to these countries, but also those who got oth-

er types of visas, such as for business, touristic and other purposes. ■

THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

Public Broadcaster • TV Stations • Radio Stations • Print Media • Online Media

by Serbeze Haxhijaj
Journalist

INTRODUCTION

As in every sphere of its political and social development, Kosovo has a short history of media pluralism. Until July 1990, Kosovo had one state-owned broadcaster, Radio Television of Pristina (RTP), one daily newspaper, *Rilindja*, as well as some weekly and monthly magazines. In summer 1990, the Yugoslav regime imposed its administration on Kosovo's media outlets by expelling all Kosovo Albanian workers who did not accept censorship measures. An information black-out prevailed in Kosovo until the end of the war in terms of electronic media. Immediately after the war, in September 1999, the United Nations administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) established the public broadcaster, Radio

Television of Kosovo (RTK), while two private-owned broadcasters, RTV21 and KTV, were established one year later. Nowadays, there are more than 450 media outlets in Kosovo. The number of journalists employed is unknown as many media outlets do not provide working contracts to their employees, while the main organization for journalists, the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK) counts more than 400 members on its register.

The Kosovo media market is very small, but there is a large number of media outlets operating within this small market, although many of them operate with a small staff. ►



► Studies show that incomes from state institutions' advertisements are the main financial source for many news portals, while private advertising power is small and concentrated in a limited number of media outlets.

The pluralism of Kosovo media includes around 30 TV channels, more than 120 radio stations, 4 daily newspapers and around 300 news portals. ■

THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER – RADIO TELEVISION OF KOSOVO (RTK)

Established in September 1999, Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) operates with four TV channels, with RTK1 serving as broadcaster for a general Albanian audience, RTK2 as a channel for minority communities, RTK3 as a news channel and RTK4 focusing mainly on education and culture. There are plans to establish another channel which would be focused

mainly on following the parliament's work, but this is yet to materialize. With more than 900 employees, in 2019, RTK operated with a budget of 11 200 000 euros allocated from Kosovo's budget. Since 2010, RTK has been financed directly from the Kosovo budget although approval is awaited of a new law which is being drafted. ■

PRIVATE NATIONAL TERRESTRIAL TV STATIONS

There are only three TV stations in Kosovo with terrestrial licenses to broadcast at national level via terrestrial signal: RTK, KTV and TV21, all broadcasting in Albanian. While RTK is mainly financed from the Kosovo budget with more than 11 million euros in 2019, the other two TV channels are mainly dependent on adver-

tisements, with lower annual budgets because there are no subsidies from the government. All three terrestrial broadcaster have relatively good coverage of Kosovo territory with just some remote mountainous areas facing difficulties getting the signal. ■



PRIVATE NATIONAL TV STATIONS THAT BROADCAST VIA SATELLITE

KTV and TV21 are the only two of Kosovo's private national TV channels that broadcast via satellite but with the swift expansion of the cable

network in Kosovo, their main audience has remained in the diaspora. ■

REGIONAL TV STATIONS

In Kosovo, this kind of TV channel has lost its meaning with the swift expansion of the cable network. In the early 2000s, the Independent Media Commission issued several licenses for regional TV channels with territorial expansion

in municipalities which applied. Most of them are now part of the cable network platform and can be watched all over Kosovo where these operators are licensed to operate. ■

LOCAL RADIO STATIONS

There are seven national, seven regional, more than eighty local and a handful of internet-based radio stations. There are no figures about their

incomes, but they are mostly based on advertisements and provide programmes for the audiences of all communities living in Kosovo. ■



PRINT MEDIA

Following a period of blossoming, print media are in decline in Kosovo in recent years, after the swift expansion of the internet and the rise of news portals which offer easier access to news. Currently, there are four daily newspapers, *Koha*

Ditore, *Zëri*, *Epoka e Re* and *Bota Sot*, with an extremely low daily circulation. Their incomes are mainly dependent on advertisements. Weekly magazines have also ceased to exist for years. ■

ONLINE MEDIA

There are around 300 news portals operating in Kosovo, with most of them having begun operation in the last five years when internet access became omnipresent among readers. Most online media publish informative content while

many of them are understaffed and republish stories from each other without any control of the content, focusing mainly on politics, sports, and entertainment (showbiz). ■

REGULATION IN THE MEDIA SECTOR IN KOSOVO

There is no media law in Kosovo, although in 2013 the Kosovo parliament approved a law on the protection of journalists' sources which allows journalists to remain silent regarding their sources of information, with some specific exceptions.

However, there are some mechanisms that deal with media regulation and self-regulation. Established in 2005, the Independent Media Commission (IMC) functions as an independent body and is responsible for the regulation, management, and oversight of the broadcasting frequency spectrum in Kosovo. On the other hand, print and online media are not regulated by law or any oversight body while the Press Council of Kosovo operates as a self-regulatory body founded for and by the print media sector in Kosovo. Established in 2005 with the help of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, its mission is based on the principles of the Press Code of Kosovo. ■

→ INTERNET

Association of Journalists of Kosovo(AJK)

→ agk-ks.org

Press Council of Kosovo

→ presscouncil-ks.org

Independent Media Commission

→ kpm-ks.org

Kosovo Institute for Media and Communications (IKMK)

→ ikmk-ks.com

Institute of communication studies

→ iks.edu.mk

Kosovo Radio and Television

→ rtklive.com

TV 21

→ rtv21.tv

Kohavision TV

→ kohavision.tv

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

by Arbnora Dushi

Folklore scholar, Institute of Albanology, Pristina/ Prishtina

In addition to institutional and architectural sites, Kosovo's rich cultural heritage is also manifested through oral traditions, ritual practices, traditional costumes, and other cultural activities whose practice has given them the status of custom and traditions.

One of Kosovo's oldest and most characteristic traditions is warm and generous hospitality to guests and friends. The roots of this tradition are ancient, embedded in the age-old adage, 'The house of the Albanian belongs to God, the guest, and the master of the house', and it continues to characterize the people of Kosovo even today. Even if tourists arrive with skepticism on their first visit, they always leave with the desire to come back again, because of the warm and generous hospitality they have received from local people. Part of this hospitality is the tradition

of preparing food and a rich menu, which -despite the great similarities with Balkan and oriental cuisine - is also known for typical local recipes.

Weddings continue to be the most ceremonial family act, where the tradition of the groom going to his bride's home to take her away, accompanied by music and dances and many guests rejoicing and dancing, is a custom that continues to be practiced in Kosovo.

Folk songs always accompany traditional ceremonies. This folkloric heritage includes **epic songs**, but also **ballads** which are still sung in certain ethno-cultural areas. The Rugova Gorge near Peja stands out; there, the traditional practice of playing the **lahuta** (single-stringed musical instrument always accompanied by singing) is still kept alive. The **çifteli** (two-stringed instrument) is still ▶



► used to sing many folk songs dedicated to heroes and national historical events.

The extremely diverse **traditional costumes** specific to particular areas in Kosovo, the typical folk songs and dances of the area, but also performances of traditional rituals, are preserved and cultivated today through folklore festivals, which have already gained the status of traditional events. The most renowned are the **Drenas Festival**, which is organized every four years, the **Has Festival**, which is organized every year at the start of

May, and the **Anadrina Festival**. Performing in these festivals are professional groups but also virtuosos and amateurs, who compete with high-quality performances of singing, dancing, and the presentation of folk costumes.

A new type of festival in Kosovo is **Etno-Fest**, which is an outdoor annual event that for a decade now has been organized at the end of August in the rural setting of the village of Kukaj. The purpose of organizing this festival is to preserve tradition, by using a historical





setting and restoring the memory of heritage. Soloists and groups from all Albanian lands, including Kosovo, offer popular songs and other performances, exhibitions and handicrafts. Of a similar nature is **Hardh-Fest**, which is related to the tradition of grape harvesting and is organized in Orahovac/Rahovec where there are vineyards and wineries that produce Kosovo's wines.

Being a culturally rich country, Kosovo also has state folk ensembles, such as **The National Ensemble of Song and Dance, 'Shota'**, and **the Rugova Autochthonous Folklore Ensemble**, which have been active for many decades now.

Cultural heritage, folklore, traditions and

customs, but also their confrontation with the trends of modernity, are researched and analyzed in research and publishing projects of the **Albanological Institute** in Pristina/Prishtina. This scientific research institution, founded in 1953, has departments of Folklore and Ethnology, which have researched and published several dozen volumes of folklore materials. Through analytical research projects, dozens of monographs and publications related to research on traditional Albanian culture and comparison to other peoples in Kosovo and the Balkans, have also been published. This Institute publishes its annual scientific journal, the ***Albanological Research Folklore and Ethnology series***, with papers that analytically address issues from traditional culture. ■

FOOD IN KOSOVO

by Arben Zeqiri

International consultant and global traveler (to more than 120 countries), and full-time foodie

Food is an essential part of everyday culture in Kosovo. Big family gatherings are a common tradition and they usually revolve around food with traditional food recipes often passed down through generations. Kosovo is a small country which explains why its food – though it is a big part of everyday life in Kosovo – has not been recognized as one of the mainstream food types, as has happened with Greek, Italian, French, and other cuisines.

Being at the heart of Balkan peninsula, Kosovo has had its share of different influences from Turkish, Serbian, Austro-Hungarian, Italian, and Greek. With lots of fresh produce, which is predominately organic, especially when one visits rural areas, the food is based on fresh vegetables and meat which can be served as stews, salads, fried, grilled, and baked.

Most people still prefer buying from local farmers markets due to the freshness of the ingredients. When it comes to meat, there are still butchers where most locals in cities prefer to purchase their fresh meat. However, nowadays there are multiple supermarkets (local, Italian, Austrian, etc.) offering a variety of local and international produce, from cheeses, to wines, to spices, etc. as you

would find in any other European country.

Dishes vary from lighter during the summer using lots of fresh local produce to rich meat-based stews and pickled vegetables during the colder days of fall and winter with plenty of colors, and taste galore. One of the favorite dishes is of *speca* - roasted and peeled long green peppers, served usually during the summer days when the peppers are at the peak of their freshness. Peppers – which can be either hot, mild or sweet – are sautéed in olive oil or sunflower oil until they start caramelizing, and can be served either with garlic and parsley; dipped in eggs and flour and pan-fried; or as a dip called *specanë mazë* made with local cheese (which is similar to young feta, and in certain cases like an older ricotta) and cream. Traditional bread called *pogaçe*, which is flaky and soft, is usually served alongside and used for dipping in the dish and for soaking up all the juices.

Gjyveç - or, as it is also known in Albanian, *turli* - is a mix of fresh summer vegetables with tomatoes, peppers, onions, spring onions, leeks, and zucchini which are pan-roasted with black pepper, spices, and paprika, and then baked until soft and caramelized around the edges. ▶



► **Pies**, (pite or burek; Turkish börek) are a big part of Kosovo food. Pies come in different shapes and forms and they are also eaten as fast food and can be found all over the country in bakeries or little shops called bu-rektore. Some of the favorite pies are with spinach and leek (similar to Greek spanakopita), cheese and cream, pumpkin with cream, cabbage sautéed in milk and cream, minced meat with spices and pepper, potatoes with spices and pepper, and pickled cabbage with spices and pepper, yogurt and garlic. Another is called përpëç or qumështor (in Albania), a delicious pie which resembles a cheese quiche - made of eggs, cheese, milk and cream.

This list would not be completed without the famous **flija**. The process for cooking **flija** is painstakingly long, but the end result is a delicious dish made from multiple thin layers of batter similar in consistency to crepes, with **kajmak** or cream cheese, and butter in between the layers. Watching the cook prepare **flija** is fascinating. The cook spreads thin strips of crepe mix onto a round pan using the spoon starting from the outer edge of the pan towards the middle, leaving small spaces between the strips. The layers are then baked by using a metal dome called a **saç** which is heated using wood and which bakes the layer of strips in less than a minute. Once this layer is baked, the cook will spread a thin





layer of cream cheese, milk and butter, and then continue with spreading the next layer of strips, which is then again baked and so alternating between the two until all the ingredients are gone. *Flija* is a dish that requires sacrifice, skill and patience - the word itself means 'sacrifice' in Albanian.

Corn is also a common ingredient in many traditional dishes. One such dish is *leqenik*, a pie made with corn flour, milk, cheese, eggs, spinach, spring onions, and/ or leeks, which looks similar to corn bread, but with the added taste of spinach, cheese, and cream. *Kaçamak* is another dish which is similar to Italian polenta. Polenta or corn meal is cooked slowly with milk, cream, butter, and cheese until it is pretty thick in consistency, and it is served hot either as a side dish or

on its own with feta cheese crumbled on top.

In recent years, traditional food has made a big comeback in Kosovo, and many restaurants have started serving traditional dishes that in the past were typical home-made dishes and not usually found in restaurants. *Peppers* stuffed with minced beef, spices and paprika, and *sarma* cabbage rolls stuffed with minced beef, spices and paprika, are two traditional dishes which are served when the weather gets colder, and can also be found throughout the region and all the way to Russia. Stuffed zucchini with minced beef is another dish which is similar in preparation, however usually served during the warmer days when zucchini is fresh.

Elbasan tavë is a dish which was originally ►

► invented in Albania but adopted in Kosovo and even in Turkish cuisine. It's a delicious rich dish of either lamb or veal cooked in a traditional clay dish with yogurt, garlic, spices and cream until the meat is tender, juicy and almost completely falling apart. The tartness of the Greek-style yogurt, and the sweetness of the cream together with the garlic and spices, fills your mouth with flavor, and the aroma coming from the clay dish – which continues to keep the food warm even after it is out of the oven – elevates the whole experience even further.

Fasule në tavë is another dish which is served in traditional clay dishes. Beans are cooked over a slow fire with onions, garlic, carrots, spices, black pepper, sweet peppers, and smoked beef jerky (which is locally called *përshut*) until they start caramelizing around the edges of the dish and it is all bubbling.

The smokiness of the dried beef together with other spices like black pepper and paprika, and caramelization from the slow cooking in the oven, makes this dish perfect for winter.

Mantia is another favorite dish among the local population, served throughout the year, and consisting of filo-style pastry spread thin and filled with minced beef, onions, leeks, garlic, spices, and sweet paprika, and then rolled into little parcels which are baked in the oven, and served with Greek-style yogurt, garlic, and cucumbers as *tarator* (*tzatziki*), or as they are.

Grilling is a big thing in Kosovo. Dishes like *qebapa*, *qofte*, or the *Sharri qofte* served with *kajmak* (soft cream which has the consistency of cream cheese, but is actually thick cream just before it is turned to butter) and





cheese, or *suxhuk*, can be found throughout the country in small restaurants called *qe-baptore*, dedicated to grilling. Some of them have been in business for many decades, passing their cooking skills and knowledge from generation to generation. *Qebapa*, or *qofte*, are made of minced beef which is mixed with onions, garlic, and spices, and then divided into small little sausages and cooked slowly over hot coals which smoke the meat at the same time as it is grilled, giving the meat a delicious smoky, savory taste and aroma. They are usually served with flat bread called *samun* or *pitalka*, and a mixed salad of tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and feta cheese.

Coffee culture has always been an inherent part of Kosovo society. However, in the last couple of decades, with the opening of many coffee shops, coffee has become a universal part of Kosovo culture. There are many coffee shops that can be found on almost

every corner, and they are meeting points for friends, as well as places to conduct business meetings. Coffee shops serve a variety of coffees, starting with the famous macchiato (Pristina/ Prishtina has been voted as the capital of macchiato), cappuccino, café latte, etc. Together with coffee you will find dishes which are typically served for breakfast and/ or lunch like *llokuma* (savory little squares of dough made out of yogurt, eggs, milk, and baking soda, fried to perfection and served with yogurt and feta cheese), or *krofne* (similar to French beignets) covered in a dust of sugar, perfect for a morning or afternoon snack.

Recently, a restaurant opened in New York called *Çka ka qëllue* (a hospitality motto in the Kosovan home), where mainly traditional Albanian food from Kosovo is prepared. The restaurant has aroused a lot of interest, and the *New York Times* dedicated an entire page to it. ■

WINE

by Taulant Gecaj

Administrator at Elena Sh.p.k. corporate specialists in the wine and spirits industry

Kosovo holds great potential for wine. Grapevine cultivation has a particularly long history in the country with numerous traces having been found which can prove that this region has been producing wine for over 2000 years.

The most ancient pieces of evidence for the existence of wine culture in the region are centuries-old wine jars discovered by archaeologists in Reti Village in Rahovec and in Helvetica Teqe.

Today, Kosovo has plenty of grape varieties - both local and international - planted with over 3 320ha of vines. The capacity of grape processing is between 30 000 and 40 000 tons of grapes yearly and the storage capacity is 500 000 hl.

Kosovo exports 40% bottled and 60% bulk wine, with bottled wines mainly exported to Albania, while bulk wine goes to Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Germany among others.

The Rahovec Valley near the cities of Gjakova and Prizren is by far the biggest wine region in Kosovo, with almost 70% of Kosovo vineyards located there: an average of 270 days of sunshine, the Drini river and an altitude

of 350-500m make this area an ideal spot to make good wines.

Stone Castle Vineyards and Winery is the largest and oldest winery in Kosovo, having been producing wines for almost seventy years and owning 650ha of active vineyards. It produces white, red, rose and sparkling wine, using a broad range of grape varieties, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Vranac, and Riesling.

Vranac is the most traditional and authentic wine grape variety in Kosovo and the region. Vranac wines are dark-colored and fruity, with notes of cinnamon, pepper, plum and cherry, and are very well-balanced.

Besides Stone Castle Winery the Kosovo Wine Route will take wine lovers to smaller but not to be ignored wineries, such as Bodrumi I Vjetër, Kosovo Wine, Biopak, and Sefa. ■

→ INTERNET

Stone Castle Winery

→ stonecastlewine.com



KOSOVO AND ALTERNATIVE TOURISM

The Battle of Kosovo – the Field of Blackbirds • Promotion of coffee culture •
Monuments to American Presidents

by Muamer Hasani,

MA in Sociology, Curator at the Sultan Murat tomb complex

No cultural or study visit to Southeast Europe, and especially to the Western Balkans, can be complete without Kosovo being part of it. Although this statement sounds just like pompous advertising, it can be verified with a review of all that the country offers. Since Kosovo does not have a coast, then its offer has to concentrate mainly on cultural tourism, cuisine, eco-tourism, etc., and its menu can be quite wide and interesting.

THE BATTLE OF KOSOVO – THE FIELD OF BLACKBIRDS

Only a few kilometers away from Pristina/ Prishtina, a battle took place in 1389 between the Ottoman Empire and a Balkan coalition, which resulted in the physical and spiritual division of Europe. Today, a monument stands as a witness to this event. European peoples have names in their languages for this event. The Germans called it Amselfeld, and during the 1970s and 1980s the wine imported there from Kosovo had the same name. How important this monument is in terms of history, politics, culture, but also religion, is revealed by some facts listed below. The tomb which stands nearby receives about 20 000 visitors a

year without any marketing.

The monument in question is the mausoleum of Sultan Murat located in the village of Mazgit and is the oldest Ottoman architecture in Kosovo, dating from the fourteenth century. From the fifteenth century until today, there is no guide, geographer, historian, or pilgrim (most of whom have been westerners), who does not mention the Battle of Kosovo and the Murat mausoleum. Jean Palerne, in the second half of the sixteenth century, Edward Browne, and Johann Georg von Hahn, who would later be called the father of Albanian studies, travelled through the southern ►



► Balkans and visited the mausoleum.

Edith Durham gained a great reputation among northern Albanians for her interest and support for their cause. She was known in the mountains as the 'Queen of the Highlanders' and she travelled to Pristina/ Prishtina, and of course visited the tomb of Sultan Murat, and gives abundant details about its condition. Then we have Rebecca West, author of *Black Lamb and Gray Falcon*, and also known as a critic, essayist, and feminist. West and her husband visited Yugoslavia on the

eve of the outbreak of World War II.

The winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature (1996), Polish poet Wisława Szymborska, in her poem entitled 'Reality Demands', writes of the Kosovo battlefield,

'Reality demands
that we also mention this:
Life goes on.

It continues at Cannae and Borodino,
at Kosovo Polje and Guernica.' ■

PROMOTION OF COFFEE CULTURE

'God, please don't leave us without coffee'

'Where is the best macchiato in the world? It's not in Italy?! Wherever you go in Kosovo you can find better macchiato than in Italy,' says the article by Jo Piazza, which was published in October 2014 when Kosovo was declared the country

with the best macchiato in the world.

In Kosovo there are several theories as to why our macchiatos are the best in the world, one of them being that bartenders in our country have Master's degrees. Perhaps this theory holds true, but looking at the history we see that Alba-





nians have a deep connection with coffee.

Coffee reached Europe through the Ottoman Empire during the second siege of Vienna (1683), when for the first time this 'strange' drink fell into the hands of Europeans. At first Europeans were skeptical about the drink, which was be-

lieved to turn you Turkish or Muslim. However, in a very short time it penetrated every corner of the old continent. The first Europeans who laid their hands on coffee and made emotional connections with it were not the Viennese, but the Albanians. ■

MONUMENTS TO AMERICAN PRESIDENTS

Something interesting that could be shown as a tourist attraction in Kosovo would be the existence of monuments, boulevards, street names, and even shops named after American political personalities. There are seven countries outside the US who have monuments of American presidents: Albania, Cameroon, China, Great Britain, Greece, Mexico, and Kosovo.

Kosovo erected a monument to Bill Clinton in 2009, next to a store named after his wife, Hillary. There is a Woodrow Wilson Street and just behind Clinton Boulevard are George W. Bush and Robert Dole Streets. From here one can walk to the bust of Madeleine Albright, the former US Secretary of State during the Clinton administration. This was erected in 2019, on the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Kosovo. ■

MOUNTAINS

by Arineta Mula

Alpinist, Mountain Guide Montalb

Kosovo offers a wide range of fascinating and fun adventures, many of which are wild and hidden away from the world. It is home to the Accursed Mountains range, also referred to as the Albanian Alps, which spread right across Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro and touch the western part of the country from where you can hike to Gjeravica, one of the most beautiful peaks in the Balkans and surrounded by glacial lakes.

Within this mountain range, and just twenty minutes from the old town of Peć/ Peja, lies the mysterious and charming Rugova Valley which covers an area of 32 000 hectares. It is huge, unspoilt and breathtakingly beautiful. The valley is also home to a small number of villages which in turn house a variety of guest homes and restaurants, all of which have become famous for their hospitality and charm. To learn more of the culture you simply have to taste the delicious local traditional food, the recipes of which have been handed down from one generation to another. It just doesn't get more authentic than this.

The Rugova Canyon, 25km long and 1000m

deep, is considered one of Europe's longest and deepest canyons, and although lined with quite sharp rocks, they can easily be climbed through three existing Via Ferratas. If you're looking for a majestic view of the mountains in a different way, you just found it.

Go a little further south towards Priren/Prizreni, and you will discover the Sharr Mountain National Park range which is 80km in length and includes glacial lakes and periglacial landscapes. Luboten peak is the first mountain which stands as a pyramid followed by other peaks, forming breath-taking long ridges one after another.

If, however, you prefer skiing to hiking then you haven't been forgotten. Nestled in the Sharr Mountains is the ski resort of Brezovica, and although this may not be St Moritz, it has some superb alpine terrain providing great free-ride and tree skiing opportunities on a par with anything you will ever find.

If you love the wild, the untouched and the breath-taking, you'll find it all here in Kosovo. ■



SPORT

by Leart Hoxha

Sports Journalist, Kosovo

As can be expected from a country with one of the youngest populations in Europe, sport is very popular in Kosovo and lately we have seen a further growth of popularity and importance, due to the successes of Kosovo judokas and the national football team in international competitions.

Majlinda Kelmendi is Kosovo's biggest sporting star on the international stage and one of the most accomplished judokas in the world in this decade. Majlinda won gold in the Rio Olympics in 2016, in the 52kg category, in what was a truly historic moment, since it came in the first Olympics where Kosovo participated as an independent country.

Besides her Olympic title, Majlinda has been crowned world champion twice (2013 in Rio

and 2014 in Chelyabinsk), she also has four European titles to her name as well as the prestigious World Judoka of the Year award, which she won in 2016.

The Kosovo National Judo Team features other world class judokas like Akil Gjakova, Distria Krasniqi, Lorian Kuka, and Nora Gjakova, all of them coached by Driton Kuka, one of the best judo coaches in the world. In the next Olympics, judo is the only sport in which Kosovo stands a chance of making it to the Olympic rostrum.

Majlinda's groundbreaking success and first Olympic medal was only made possible after the Kosovo Olympic Committee was affiliated to the International Olympic Committee at the end of 2014, in a landmark event that started ►





► the international recognition of Kosovo sports organizations and enabled their participation in international competitions. The process was concluded in the summer of 2016 after FIFA voted to include the Kosovo Football Federation as a member with full rights. Such international recognition came after 25 years of sports activity in total isolation, firstly in the period of oppression under the Milošević regime in the 'nineties after the breakup of Yugoslavia and then in the post-war period between 1999 and 2014 when Kosovo was not allowed to participate in international sports events, for political reasons.

Football is the most popular of sports traditionally and its popularity has surged after the Kosovo National Team started to play in UEFA competitions. Kosovo is looking to qual-

ify for Euro 2020, having managed on its first attempt to win group 3 in the UEFA Nations League D competition and thus gaining a promotion to UEFA Nations League C.

The Kosovo national team plays in Fadil Vokrri stadium, named after former Pristina and Partizan Belgrade striker, widely regarded as the best Kosovan football player ever. Vokrri, who also starred in the Yugoslav national team, was the captain of the FC Pristina team that made it to the Yugoslav First Division in the 'eighties, a highlight of Kosovo's football success in the former Yugoslavia.

FC Trepça is the only other club from Kosovo that played in Yugoslav top division and once they even qualified for the final of the Yugoslav Cup.

When looking back at sports tradition, boxing plays a key part in Kosovo. The Pristina Boxing Club won five Yugoslav titles, while Aziz Salihu won the bronze medal for Yugoslavia in the 1984 Olympics in LA and Mehmet Bogujevci won the World Championship silver medal in 1978.

Basketball, handball and volleyball are very popular team sports with regular competitions in both men's and women's leagues or-

ganized and run by their respective national federations. Kosovo's U21 national handball team qualified for the World Junior Championship in 2019, marking the biggest achievement in international competitions.

The Pristina/ Prishtina International Half Marathon is the largest athletics event in Kosovo. This race has been organized annually since 2001 and attracts thousands of runners from all parts of the globe. ■



THE FASHION DESIGN INDUSTRY

by Anda Dika

*Fashion Designer and Producer for American Brands,
Monitoring & Evaluation and Communication Associate at USAID Transparent,
Effective, Accountable Municipalities project.*

The apparel industry of Kosovo has a tradition of over 200 years, and it was once the second largest and most profitable industry after mining. Considering the effective labor cost, qualified employees, and modernized equipment, Kosovo offers a business-friendly environment for all investors who seek outsourcing of apparel production. The sub-categories that are identified within the apparel industry in Kosovo are: sportswear, work wear, jeans, cocktail and bridal gowns, underwear, shoes and other leather products.

In general, sewing and patternmaking is a craft that has been passed down in families for generations in our country. Traditionally, Kosovar families used to have a sewing machine with which they would fulfill the needs of their families. Besides being a necessity, families also used this skill to make traditional clothing. As such, most of the designing, until recently, was seen in the unique handmade elements within this kind of clothing. Tradi-

tional clothing continues to be in high demand especially for ceremonial settings. Symbols of traditional clothing serve as an inspiration and a timeless concept that fashion designers integrate into the modernized styles that they offer today.

In the last two decades, fashion design has brought a lot of attention to Kosovo. What once was seen as a passion is now incorporated into a business model that many have chosen as profession. What used to be a home-based hobby where people elaborated on their artistic skills, has turned into an industry whose products are in high demand in the local, regional and international markets. Previously, in Kosovo we did not have faculties that offered fashion design as a field of study. However, the high demand of students to study in this subject has created the opportunity to study this field as a major in Kosovo and the first step that new designers take before joining the industry is to enroll for their



studies in one of the colleges/ universities. Besides university degrees, some designers choose to also follow intensive training or short courses by which they gain intermediate artistic and technical skills. Some designers have also studied abroad or have followed intensive or short courses in the region, Europe and the US.

Fashion designers in Kosovo create ready-to-wear, custom made and haute couture

garments with which they have drawn attention from all over the world. Products that can be found in the designer showrooms are mostly custom-made and include jackets, trousers, blazers, jumpsuits, tops, knitwear, casual dresses, bags, bridal gowns, and cocktail dresses. However, Kosovo designers are mostly focused on custom-made cocktail and bridal gowns. Usually, designers present two collections per year followed up with smaller collections throughout the year. Kosovan de- ▶

► signers can also offer each client an individual consultation by which they create a desired look for them. Thus, comparing the outstanding quality of the customized creations to the price of their product, they tend to be highly competitive in the regional and international markets.

Being a labor-intensive industry, designers have successfully employed hundreds of people in their production facilities. These facilities are highly structured and composed of design teams, pattern-making teams, seamstresses and the personnel who take care of handmade embellishments. In order to create unique pieces, designers usually import their fabrics from China, India, Turkey, and the Unit-

ed Arab Emirates. The rise of the fashion design industry has also created a new business opportunity for many in Kosovo selling basic and exclusive high-end fabrics. Designers often visit well-known international fairs where they get the supplies for creation of their new collections. Their visits to these fairs also create business opportunities for international suppliers, who come directly from countries around the world to meet Kosovo designers.

Besides working on their brand, some designers also offer production of private label clothing. This concept has increased the interest of international companies from the US and Europe who seek production of small collections especially for bridal and cocktail



dresses. What makes this business model interesting is that the minimum quantity produced does not need to be high given that most of the bridal and cocktail gowns are custom-made. International brands thus place orders depending on the demand that they have in their stores. The labor cost is relatively low compared to other markets where haute couture or custom-made bridal and cocktail gowns are produced. Considering that the fabrics are imported, the total cost of making a unique dress is not very low, yet it is still competitive for the international market.

Most fashion designers in Kosovo present their collections in their showrooms, which are mainly based in Pristina/ Prishtina. Some designers have managed to open up to three stores in Kosovo. Others have also successfully opened their own stores in other countries. In addition, marketing their products through social media has offered them the opportunity to have great exposure worldwide. Many have secured a place in international showrooms where they are represented by sales agents together with other designers.

Kosovo designers' creations have been worn at major artistic gatherings and red carpet events. In the last three years, their designs have been showcased at events such as the amfAR Gala, the Angel Ball, Arab Fashion Week, the BET Awards, the BRIT Awards, the Canadian Screen Awards, the Cannes Film Festival, the EMMY Awards, Filmfare Glamour and Style Awards, the Golden Globes, the Grammy Awards, the Latin Grammys, the Lux Golden Rose Awards, MTV's Video Music Awards, the Oscars, the Pre-Grammy Awards, the Royal Order of Constantine the Great and

Saint Helen Evening, the Stellar Awards, the TIME 100 Gala, the Toronto Film Festival, the UNICEF Masquerade Ball, Vanity Fair events, the Venice Film Festival, the Vogue Beauty Awards, movie premieres, music videos and live performances. Their names and pictures have been part of the most prominent fashion magazines such as ELLE Magazine, Harper's Bazaar Magazine, Metropolitan Magazine, New York Magazine, Vogue Magazine,, Wedding Planner & Lifestyle Magazine and many more. These designers have styled eminent artists of music and cinematography, and icons of the fashion industry. The presence of Kosovan designers in these events has gained high levels of media attention through their unique creations which, as well as serving as PR for their brands, has also promoted Kosovo's potential and skilled workforce..

In conclusion, the fashion industry has great potential for further development and expansion. Clients from the region often visit Kosovo to buy customized products and many others order their desired looks through online platforms. Given that it is a highly labor-intensive industry and that there is demand from the local and international market, existing brands have great potential to further expand by opening their own showrooms in other countries and increasing the number of employees within their companies. In addition, offering private label production for other brands could also become an interesting division within this industry, which would attract the interest of many international brands. Thus, the fashion design industry promises to employ a high number of people in the upcoming years, while promoting Kosovo worldwide and boosting its economy. ■

KOSOVO'S MUSIC

by Visar Munishi
Ethnomusicologist

Despite being a small country, Kosovo has been - and continues to be - a culturally rich space, where music is an integral part of everyday life. Being part of the Balkan Peninsula and living with other peoples has made cultural exchange inevitable. However, our cultural identity in general, and music in particular, remain values that characterize us as a country and as a people.

In this short article on Kosovo Albanian music, I will try to chronologically present those values that we have created over the centuries, from folklore, through classical music to rock.

Albanian **musical folklore** in Kosovo has deep artistic roots, reaching back to antiquity. The simple fact that leaves are still used as a musical instrument tells us about the old tradition of musical practice. That Kosovo as a country has cultivated music as an integral part of its culture, along with oth-

er cultural developments, is shown by the archaeological discovery in 1968 in Runik in Skënderaj, of the ocarina flute which, according to H. Mehmetaj, an archaeologist, dates from the fourth millennium BC. Furthermore, the very early tradition of *lahuta* singing of epic songs still continues within our very rich folklore. Despite the political tendencies to appropriation by neighbors, Albanian *lahuta* singing and our epic songs remain some of the most important and special values of our ethno-musical tradition.

Until recently two very specific ways of singing were found in Kosovo. The first is the singing of men, known as Malsorçe or Majekrahi singing, often used to enable communication over distance between two people. The second manner of singing is represented by the songs of girls using their fingers on their throats - the songs of shepherdesses, as they are popularly known.



This kind of singing gained its uniqueness through the placement of a finger on the throat to vibrate the larynx, whereby a special sound is obtained and a very specific kind of singing about daily life events, often with poignant lyrics.

Historical epics and songs about our national heroes, folk ballads and other genres of our musical folklore, constitute the invaluable treasure of our musical heritage. The instrumental accompaniment of *çifteli* and *sharki* instruments creates the typical feeling of the Albanian environment because these instruments, together with historical epic songs, ballads, love songs, wedding

songs, erotic songs and many other genres, have been inseparable components of the traditional Albanian environment.

We are known as a place where the tradition of **'town' and 'light' music** has taken a very important place in our taste and love for art and culture in general. We have established important centers of town and light music. Prizren/Prizreni, Đakovica/ Gjakova, Peć/ Peja, Pristina/ Prishtina, Uroševac/ Ferizaj, and many other cities have become cultural centers. Festivals like Akordet e Kosovës, Zambaku i Prizrenit, Kosovo Women Singing, and many other events of this type have been settings for our artists and composers ►

► since the second half of the last century. Singers like Esat Bicurri, Ismet Peja, Liliانا Çavolli, Nexhmije Pagarusha, Shahindere Bërlajolli, and many, many other singers, have launched rich careers at these festivals.

Classical music in Kosovo occupies a very important place in the cultural 'consumption' of our society. We see the first small steps of development in the first decades of the last century, with the organization of several choirs and artistic groups. The opening of music schools and then the music department took place in the second half of the twentieth century. For various reasons, the highest institution of classical music, the

Kosovo Philharmonic - divided into the symphonic orchestra and choir - was established quite late, i.e. in 2000, immediately after the war. Despite the success and very rich repertoire of this institution, Kosovo has not yet managed to have a proper concert hall that would meet the demands of the Kosovan art-loving public.

The Kosovo Ballet operates very successfully together with the school which was established in the 2000s. Today, Kosovo is proud of its artists who have created successful careers around the world, such as Elbenita Kajtazi, Petrit Çeku, Ramë Lahaj and many other artists. ■





During the 'sixties, a new stream of music started in Kosovo; **rock** lived its heyday in the 'eighties. Over these years, a large number of rock bands were established, which created their own identity, and at the same time the collective identity of Kosovo rock. The first years of rock in our country belonged to bands like Modestët, Mak, then Gjurmët, Minatori, 403, Telex, Lindja and many others. During the parallel life of the 'nineties and after the 2000s, a new generation of well-known rockers has emerged in Kosovo. Bands like Troja, BB Poqi with

Armadillo Blues Band, Xuxi with XXL, Margigona, then later, Jericho, Cute Babulja, Zig Zag Orchestra and many other bands, have enriched the country's cultural life, while at the same time reflecting the reality of life in Kosovo. In addition to rock bands and other artists of various musical genres, today, on the world stage of pop and modern music, Kosovo is represented by artists who have climbed to the top of world charts, such as Dua Lipa, Era Istrefi, Rita Ora and many others. ■

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GETTING AROUND

Useful information for travelers

Passports and Visas: Foreign citizens are required to have a valid passport to enter Kosovo. Citizens of EU Member States do not need a Kosovo visa if they enter the country as tourists. You may visit or transit Kosovo without a visa for up to 90 days within 6 months with a valid travel document.

For further information, visit the website of the Ministry of Foreign affairs at:

→mfa-ks.net

By air: Kosovo has one international airport in Pristina. 15 airlines operate regular scheduled and charter flights to and from Pristina. The Pristina airport is connected with the city center by regular bus line (1A) with a cost 3 Euro /person/ one-way ticket. A taxi costs 15 euros approximately, and the trip takes about 30 minutes.

→airportpristina.com

By Rail: Kosovo has not a developed domestic railway system. Kosovo's railway transportations have the following daily schedules:

The local train – travels every day from Peja to Pristina and vice versa. While there is also an international daily line from Pristina to Skopje. The free movement train – travels from Hani i Elezit to Fushë Kosovë and vice versa.

→trainkos.com

By Bus: Buses are most common to get around in the country. There are various and frequent domestic inter-city connections. Some are fast and direct, while other make stops on their routes. There are also regular international lines to Albania, Germany, Croatia, North Macedonia, etc.

→sap-rks.com

Travel by car: Kosovo has some roads under construction. The maximum speed is 80 Km/H in highways, 60km/h in the main roads and 35km/h in the urban areas. Speed limits on some parts of the roads are set at maximum 130km/h and roads are clearly signposted. There are 2 motorways in Kosovo, R6 (Arbër Xhaferi) which links Pristina with Skopje, it is still under construction and the second one is R7 (Ibrahim Rugova) which links Pristina with Albania. Drivers must use headlights at all time and have the first-aid kit and yellow vest. From November 15–cars should have snow chains. Travelling by car is the best way to explore Kosovo. Car hire companies offer competitive prices.

→beinkosovo.com

Accommodation: All categories of accommodation are available, starting from private holiday homes and private apartments, to five-star hotels of major hotel chains. Some private accommodations only accept cash payments. Youth hostels offer competitive prices for budget travelers.

Money and currency: Legal tender is Euro, no other currency is accepted. There are many exchange offices that do not charge commission. A passport is required for currency exchange at any bank. Cash is available 24/7 from cash machines, and all major credit cards are accepted. Prices in stores include VAT (18%).

Emergency phone numbers:

Police: 92 (landline)

192 (cell phone)

922 (cell phone)

Firefighters: 93

Hospital Emergency: 94

Time zone: Kosovo has CET.

Clocks are set to summer time (plus one hour) between March and October.

Electricity: The voltage is 230

You can read everything you need to know about Kosovo today in "Republic of Kosovo facts and figures". From historical turning points to how the political system works: this book covers numerous aspects of everyday life, including economy, education, foreign policy, culture and the arts, tradition, gastronomy, and many other topics.

A practical handbook, it gives you facts as well as hints on how best to enjoy Kosovo and the many places of interest that it offers.

This insightful publication includes descriptions that are easy to follow, as well as charts, tables, illustrations and photos, making it a must-have for everyone who wants to learn more about modern life in Republic of Kosovo.

