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KOSOVO

Indicators on the level of media freedom and Journalists' Safety Index 2025

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CONTENTS

About the Project

Background of the Indicators

Methodological Note

Qualitative indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety

Journalists' Safety Index

List of abbreviations

I Introduction

II Media freedom and journalists' safety in Kosovo – Indicators

A. Legal safeguards and their implementation

A.1 Basic guarantees for media and journalists' freedom and their application in practice 9

A.2 Independence and efficiency of the regulatory authority 10

A.3 Independence and autonomy of the public service media 12

A.4 Financial support to quality journalism and media content of public interest 13

A.5 State advertising in the private media sector 14

A.6 Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media 16

A.7 Other laws are enforced objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely 17

A.8 The confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities 18

A.9 Journalists are free to pursue their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations 20

A.10 Right to access official documents and information 20

B. Legal safeguards and their implementation 22

B.1 The job positions of journalists are stable and protected at the workplace 22

B.2 Editorial independence in the private media 22

B.3 Editorial independence in the public service media 24

B.4 Editorial independence in the non-profit media sector 25

B.5 Freedom of journalists in the news production process 25

B.6 Working position of women journalists 26

2 C. Journalists' Safety 28

2 C.1 Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures when they are threatened 28

4 C.2 Journalists and other media actors (whose lives or physical integrity are at real and immediate risk) have access to special protection or safety mechanisms 29

7 C.3 Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms when faced with gender-based threats, harassment, and violence 30

9 C.4 The practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media has been established 31

C.5 Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issue 32

C.6 Specialised investigation units and/or officers are equipped with relevant expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists 33

C.7 Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently (independently, thoroughly and promptly) 34

C.8 Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment 35

C.9 Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently 36

C.10 Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity 37

C.11 Non-physical threats and harassments 37

C.12 Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists 39

C.13 Actual attacks 39

C.14 Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists' associations 40

III Conclusions and Recommendations 42

IV Journalists' Safety Index Kosovo – 2025 47

About the Project

BACKGROUND OF THE INDICATORS

The journalists' associations from the Western Balkan countries, supported by the European Commission¹, have established the platform [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) to jointly monitor media legislation and practice in their countries and engage in advancing the legal and institutional environment in which the journalists and other media professionals work. Every year, based on a carefully designed methodology², the [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) partners conduct advocacy research which has provided journalists' associations with evidence-based, reliable, and relevant data on the main problems and obstacles in the implementation of the EU standards in the field of media and journalists' freedom and safety in the Western Balkans. The results of the advocacy research give substance to partners' activities, providing them with new evidence and examples that refine and strengthen their advocacy positions.

The first qualitative research tool – *Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety*, was first developed in 2016 and gradually fine-tuned over the years. It is composed of three groups of indicators: (A) Legal protection, (B) Journalists' position in the newsroom, and (C) Journalists' safety. Based on this monitoring tool, a total of seven assessments were published, the last one for 2022.

The quantitative research tool – *Journalists' Safety Index*, was developed in 2020 and tested in 2021. It is designed to 'measure' the changes in the environment that have direct or indirect impact

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- 1 In December 2022, the European Commission approved a new three-year cycle of the Project [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net), which is a continuation of the previous two phases: the project Western Balkan's Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists' safety (01.2016–12.2018) and [Safejournalist.net](https://safejournalist.net) (02.2020–03.2023). The main objective of the Project is to empower and strengthen the role of the national journalists' associations, members of the Platform [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net), to become effective and accountable independent actors in advocating and creating relevant media policies in their countries: Independent Journalists Association of Serbia (IJAS), Association of BH Journalists (BHJ), Croatian Journalists Association (CJA), Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK), Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) and the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro (TUMM). The project is funded under the EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021–2023 (IPA III).
 - 2 The advocacy research is designed and coordinated by Snezana Trpevska and Igor Micevski, research fellows of the Research Institute on Social Development RESIS, from North Macedonia (www.resis.mk).

on how safe journalists and other media actors feel when practicing their profession. It is composed of four groups of indicators: (1) Legal and Organisational Environment, (2) Due Prevention, (3) Due Process, and (4) Actual Safety. Based on this tool, a total of three research cycles were implemented: 2020 (pilot year), 2021 and 2022.

Starting from 2023, the [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) combined the two (qualitative and quantitative) research tools into one single advocacy research project – *Indicators on the level of media freedom and Journalists' Safety Index*. The platform monitors the situation in seven countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo³ and Serbia.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The entire research process is divided into two phases: in the *first phase*, data is collected for all qualitative indicators – both for media freedoms and for the safety of journalists, while in the *second phase*, the qualitative indicators for the safety of journalists are converted into quantitative ones and the procedure of scoring and calculation of the Journalists' Safety Index is carried out.

A range of various research methods were applied to collect and analyze data related to each specific qualitative indicator:

- Review of studies, analyses, research reports, policy papers, strategies and other documents;
- Qualitative analysis of legal documents;
- Retrieval and analysis of information published on the web sites of public institutions and other organizations and bodies;
- Retrieval and analysis of press releases, announcements and other information produced by professional organisations;
- Secondary data collected by journalists' associations;
- In-depth-interviews with experts, journalists, policy makers etc.;
- Focus groups with journalists, and
- Surveys with journalists (in some of the countries).

At national level, the advocacy research is conducted by national researchers who carry out the data collection and draft the narrative reports, which were then reviewed by local media and legal experts and by the lead researcher. In Kosovo],

3 This name is without prejudice to the status and in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and the opinion of the Tribunal on the Declaration and Independence of Kosovo.

the Association of Journalists of Kosovo nominated Getoarë Mulliqi as national researchers, Abit Hoxha as media expert, and Yll Zekaj as national legal expert to review the report.

QUALITATIVE INDICATORS ON THE LEVEL OF MEDIA FREEDOM AND JOURNALISTS' SAFETY

The following table presents all qualitative indicators for the level of media freedom and safety of journalists, divided into three areas. These qualitative indicators are presented in descriptive or narrative form. Part of the indicators that are used in the conceptual framework for the Journalists' Safety Index is marked in **red** on the table.

Overview of all qualitative indicators (Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety)

A. Legal safeguards and their implementation	B. Journalists' position in the newsrooms	C. Journalists' safety
A.1 Basic guarantees for media and journalists' freedom and their application in practice	B.1 The job positions of journalists are stable and protected at the workplace	C.1 Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures
A.2 Independence and efficiency of the regulatory authority	B.2 Editorial independence in the private media	C.2 Journalists and other media actors have access to special protection or safety mechanisms
A.3 Independence and autonomy of the public service media	B.3 Editorial independence in the public service broadcasters	C.3 Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms when faced with gender-based threats, harassment or violence
A.4 Financial support to quality journalism and media content of public interest	B.4 Editorial independence in the not-for-profit media sector	C.4 Practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media has been established
A.5 State advertising in the private media sector	B.5 Freedom of journalists in the news production process	C.5 Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issue
A.6 Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media	B.6 Working position of women journalists	C.6 Specialised units/officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists
A.7 Other laws are enforced objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely		C.7 Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently (independently, thoroughly and promptly)
A.8 Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities		C.8 Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment
A.9 Journalists are free to pursue their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations		C.9 Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently
A.10 Right to access official documents and information		C.10 Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity
		C.11 Non-physical threats and harassments
		C.12 Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists
		C.13 Actual attacks
		C.14 Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists' associations

JOURNALISTS' SAFETY INDEX

Taking into consideration the standards and recommendations established by the Council of Europe and other international organisations, the concept of "journalists' safety"⁴ was operationalized by considering the following four dimensions:

- I. **Legal and Organisational Environment** – the existence and implementation of legal safeguards relevant for the safety of journalists.
- II. **Due Prevention** – the existence and implementation of a range of preventative measures that have direct effects on journalists' protection and safety
- III. **Due Process** – the behaviour of state institutions and public officials towards journalists and the efficiency of the criminal and civil justice system concerning the investigations of threats and acts of violence against journalists.
- IV. **Actual Safety** – incidents and instances of various forms of threats and acts of violence against journalists and media.

The table below presents the four dimensions and indicators that make up the theoretical model of the "journalists' safety" concept. Data for all these indicators were collected in the first phase of the research, and in the second phase, based on the collected research evidence, nine members of the Advisory Panel from each of the countries⁵ assessed the situation and assigned scores for each of the 19 indicators:

Overview of indicators related to the Journalists' Safety Index

I. Legal and Organisational Environment	II. Due Prevention	III. Due Process	IV. Actual Safety
1.1 Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media	2.1 Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures	3.1 Specialised units/officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists	4.1 Non-physical threats and harassments
1.2 Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities	2.2 Journalists and other media actors have access to special protection or safety mechanisms	3.2 Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently	4.2 c
1.3 Other laws are enforced objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely	2.3 Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms	3.3 Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment	4.3 Actual attacks
1.4 Journalists are free to pursue their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations	2.4 Practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media	3.4 Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently	4.4 Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists' associations

4 Researchers from the RESIS Institute (www.resis.mk), Snežana Trpevska, Igor Micevski and Ljubinka Popovska Toševa developed the [conceptual and methodological framework](#) for the Index and the model for its aggregation, weighting and calculation.

5 Members of the Advisory Panel in Kosovowere: Imer Mushkolaj, Labinot Leposhtica, Mexhide Demolli, Jeton Mehmeti, Albana Rexha, Latif Mustafa, Sandra Cvetkovic, Florande Morina, Leonida Molliqaj.

I. Legal and Organisational Environment	II. Due Prevention	III. Due Process	IV. Actual Safety
1.5 The job positions of journalists are stable and protected at the workplace	2.5 Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issue	3.5 Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity	

Note: When the male form is used in this report, it always refers simultaneously to female, male and diverse individuals. Multiple designations are omitted for the sake of better readability.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIP – Information and Privacy Agency

AJK – Association of Journalists of Kosovo

BIRN – Balkan Investigative Reporting Network

EC – European Commission

EU – European Union

ECHR – European Convention on Human Rights

IMC (KPM) – Independent Media Commission

IKD – Kosovo Law Institute

KDI – Kosovo Democratic Institute

KALLXO – KALLXO.com (Investigative Media Platform)

MASHTI – Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

MPM – Media Pluralism Monitor

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PSM – Public Service Media

RTK – Radio Television of Kosovo

SLAPP – Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation

UN – United Nations

UN Women – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Introduction

Kosovo is a parliamentary democratic republic, with a clear separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The President serves as the head of state, while executive power is exercised by the Government led by the Prime Minister. The Assembly of Kosovo consists of 120 members, with 20 seats reserved for non-majority communities, including 10 for the Serbian community and the remaining for Bosniaks, Turks, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, and Gorani. Kosovo remains a multi-ethnic society, with Albanians forming the majority population, while minority communities enjoy constitutionally guaranteed cultural, linguistic, and political rights. Despite these formal guarantees, the political culture continues to be shaped by elements of clientelism, political patronage, and perceptions of corruption, which influence institutional functioning and public trust. These dynamics also affect the media sector, where political and economic pressures often intersect.

The political environment in Kosovo during 2025 remained highly polarised, with continued tensions between government institutions and critical media. Public sphere has increasingly been marked by hostile discourses towards journalists, including verbal attacks, delegitimisation of media, and attempts to frame critical reporting as politically motivated or biased. Several cases documented by the Association of Journalists of Kosovo indicate a pattern of pressure, particularly from public officials. At the same time, the European Commission's 2025 Report notes that Kosovo has made no progress in the field of freedom of expression, while highlighting concerns related to political pressure, weak institutional responses to attacks against journalists, and challenges in the functioning of media regulatory bodies. Developments such as the institutional crisis within the Independent Media Commission (IMC), including lack of quorum and governance disputes, further illustrate the fragility of media oversight structures. In this context, journalists operate in an environment where political tensions directly affect their professional security and editorial independence.

Kosovo's economic conditions continue to pose structural challenges for the media sector. While the country has experienced moderate economic growth, it remains characterised by a small market, limited public investment, and high dependence on remittances. The media sector, in particular, faces significant financial constraints. There is no comprehensive system of state support for independent media, apart from the public broadcaster RTK, which is funded through the state budget. Most private media rely heavily on digital advertising revenues dominated by global platforms such as Google and Meta, as well as project-based funding from international donors. This fragile financial model contributes to precarious working conditions for journalists, including low salaries, delayed payments, short-term contracts, and limited access to social protection. Economic pressures also affect editorial practices, as media outlets often prioritise financial survival over investment in investigative journalism, increasing risks of self-censorship and reducing the overall quality of public-interest reporting.

Kosovo has a pluralistic but fragmented media landscape, characterised by a large number of television, radio, and online outlets. Since 2020, print media have effectively disappeared, with all major newspapers transitioning to digital platforms. The sector includes a mix of commercial media, public service broadcasting, and a smaller number of non-profit or donor-supported outlets. The public broadcaster, RTK, operates several television and radio channels and provides programming in minority languages; however, its independence continues to be questioned due to political influence and unstable governance structures. The regulatory framework includes the Independent Media Commission (IMC) as the main regulatory authority for audiovisual media and the Press Council of Kosovo as a self-regulatory body for print and online media.

In terms of legal developments, 2025 was marked by continued debates over the independence and functioning of the IMC. The Constitutional Court repealed key provisions of the Law on the IMC, citing risks to institutional independence, particularly in relation to the appointment and dismissal of board members. At the same time, the European Commission highlighted concerns regarding political pressure on regulatory bodies, weak enforcement of legislation, and lack of effective oversight during electoral periods, including failure to address media violations due to lack of quorum. Although Kosovo's legal framework formally guarantees freedom of expression and access to information, implementation remains inconsistent. Journalists continue to face obstacles such as delays in access to public documents, lack of transparency in public institutions, and insufficient protection from harassment and intimidation.

Overall, Kosovo's media environment in 2025 reflects a combination of formal legal guarantees and persistent practical challenges. Political polarisation, economic vulnerability, and institutional weaknesses continue to shape the conditions under which journalists operate, affecting both their safety and the quality of journalism in the country.



Media freedom and journalists' safety in Kosovo – Indicators

A. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

— A.1 BASIC GUARANTEES FOR MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS' FREEDOM AND THEIR APPLICATION IN PRACTICE

The legal framework in Kosovo continues to provide a solid basis for the protection of freedom of expression and media freedom. Article 22 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo ensures the direct applicability and priority of international human rights instruments, including the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), whose Article 10 guarantees freedom of expression⁶. The Constitution further guarantees freedom of information and the freedom of the press, which are interpreted broadly to encompass the right to seek, receive and impart information, including through digital platforms and the internet⁷. Complementary legislation—such as the Law on the Independent Media Commission, the Law on Access to Public Documents, and the Law on the Protection of Journalists' Sources, reinforces these guarantees and provides mechanisms for protecting journalistic work and access to information⁸.

In practice, however, the implementation of these guarantees continues to face challenges, particularly in relation to political influence over regulatory institutions and legislative initiatives affecting the media sector. During 2025, there were no known cases in which state authorities attempted to block or filter internet content or otherwise restrict public access to the internet. Internet access remains largely unrestricted, and online media continue to operate freely in the digital sphere⁹.

6 [Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 22](#); [European Convention on Human Rights, Article 10](#).

7 [Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Articles 40 and 42](#).

8 [Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo, Law No. 04/L-137 on the Protection of Journalism Sources](#); [Law No. 06/L-081 on Access to Public Documents](#); [Law on the Independent Media Commission](#).

9 [Freedom House](#). Freedom on the Net – Kosovo; and journalists' testimonies collected through focus groups with media professionals in Kosovo, 2025.

The most significant development affecting the media legal framework in 2025 concerned the Law on the Independent Media Commission (IMC), adopted by the Assembly of Kosovo in July 2024¹⁰. The law had introduced new regulatory provisions, including licensing requirements for online media that produce and publish video content, effectively expanding the IMC's authority beyond traditional audiovisual broadcasters. These provisions raised concerns among media organizations, civil society groups, and international actors, who warned that such requirements could lead to increased state oversight over digital media and potentially restrict media pluralism¹¹. In April 2025, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo repealed the Law on the Independent Media Commission after finding that several of its provisions were incompatible with the Constitution, particularly those related to the election and dismissal of IMC members, the scope of its competencies, and the sanctioning mechanisms provided by the law¹². Submissions provided by the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK) constituted an important contribution to the Constitutional Court's review process.¹³ The Court's decision emphasized the importance of safeguarding the institutional independence of the media regulator and ensuring that legislation affecting the media sector complies with constitutional principles of freedom of expression and pluralism. The ruling was welcomed by media organizations and civil society, which had previously criticized the legislative process for lacking transparency and meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders¹⁴. The Court also underlined that any future legislative initiative aimed at reforming the IMC framework should ensure broader inclusiveness and substantive consultations with media representatives and other stakeholders.

Internet-based outlets still do not require a prior state licence, and the media market remains relatively accessible. Nonetheless, the debate surrounding the new IMC law indicates an emerging trend towards stronger regulation of online media, which has raised concerns among journalists' associations and civil society regarding possible implications for media freedom.

— A.2 INDEPENDENCE AND EFFICIENCY OF THE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The main authority responsible for regulating the audiovisual media sector in Kosovo is the Independent Media Commission. The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo establishes the IMC as an independent body responsible for licensing, regulating, and monitoring broadcasting activities (Article 141). Its mandate is further defined by the Law on the Independent Media Commission (Law No. 04/L-044)¹⁵, which provides the legal framework for overseeing audiovisual media,

10 [Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. Law on the Independent Media Commission](#), adopted July 2024.

11 [Statement of the Media Freedom Rapid Response coalition on the Kosovo media law and concerns about political influence over the media regulator](#).

12 [Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kosovo regarding the Law on the Independent Media Commission](#), April 2025.

13 [AJK submits to the Constitutional Court comments on the Law on the Independent Media Commission](#), August, 2024.

14 [Reactions and statements by the Association of Journalists of Kosovo and civil society organizations regarding the IMC law and the need for inclusive legislative consultations](#).

15 [LAW NO. 04/L-044 ON THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA COMMISSION](#).

ensuring compliance with broadcasting standards, and imposing administrative measures when violations occur.

According to the legal framework, members of the IMC are elected by the Assembly of Kosovo through procedures intended to be open, transparent, and merit-based. In principle, these procedures reflect democratic standards aimed at safeguarding the independence of the regulatory authority. However, in practice, concerns persist regarding political influence in the appointment process¹⁶. Civil society organisations and media experts have repeatedly underlined the lack of clear evaluation criteria and limited public debate on candidates' qualifications.¹⁷ Additionally, regarding the issue of the new IMC Law, IKD published the report "Politicization of the IMC", which found that the independence guaranteed by the Constitution for an independent institution such as the IMC is transformed into a dependency of this institution on the ruling party. Among other issues, the report addressed the procedure for dismissal and the grounds for dismissing IMC members.¹⁸

Developments during 2025 further exposed these shortcomings. The European Commission's Kosovo Report highlighted ongoing governance challenges within the IMC, including difficulties in exercising its regulatory mandate due to institutional instability and political pressure.¹⁹ Moreover, delays in appointments resulted in the IMC operating without full composition, which significantly affected its functionality. In early 2025, the Commission lacked the necessary quorum for decision-making, while the Appeals Board had remained without quorum since November 2023, raising serious concerns about institutional effectiveness and democratic oversight.²⁰

In principle, the IMC is mandated to operate independently from political and commercial interests. However, both domestic and international reporting indicate that this independence remains fragile in practice²¹. A major development in 2025 was the decision of the Constitutional Court to repeal the new Law on the IMC, finding provisions related to the appointment and dismissal of members incompatible with the Constitution, as they risked undermining the independence of the regulator.²²

Furthermore, changes to the IMC's internal Rules of Procedure enabled the replacement of the Chair before the end of the mandate, a move widely criticised for lacking transparency and potentially enabling political interference. Civil society organisations, including the Kosovo Law Institute²³, have argued that existing appointment and dismissal procedures risk transforming the IMC into a body dependent on parliamentary majority, thereby weakening its constitutional independence

16 Interview with Ehat Miftaraj, Executive Director of Kosovo Law Institute, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 14.01.2026.

17 Kosovo Law Institute (IKD), [Politicisation of the IMC report](#); Betimi për Drejtës.

18 Ibid.

19 [What does the European Commission's Kosovo report say about IMC?](#) November 5, 2025

20 [Kosovo 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

21 Interview with Ehat Miftaraj, Executive Director of Kosovo Law Institute, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 14.01.2026.

22 [Constitutional Court ruling opens path to strengthen media regulator's independence](#)

23 Kosovo Law Institute (IKD), [Politicisation of the IMC report](#); Betimi për Drejtës

The IMC continues to administer licensing procedures for audiovisual broadcasters, and most media outlets operate under valid licences. However, concerns persist regarding the consistency and effectiveness of regulatory enforcement. According to the European Commission, the IMC failed to act on media violations during the election campaign due to the lack of quorum for decision-making.²⁴ Additionally, the Commission's response to electoral disinformation and foreign interference was assessed as inadequate. Overall, while the legal framework provides for an independent regulator, the IMC's performance in 2025 was significantly constrained by governance failures, political pressures, and institutional paralysis, raising concerns about its ability to act in a fully independent, efficient, and neutral manner.

— A.3 INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

The autonomy and independence of Kosovo's public service media are formally guaranteed in legislation, but remain only partially protected in practice. The Law on Radio Television of Kosovo defines Radio Television of Kosovo as an independent public service broadcaster with a mandate to provide balanced, impartial and diverse programming in the public interest²⁵. The law establishes the RTK Board as the supervisory body responsible for safeguarding editorial independence and overseeing the institution's functioning.²⁶ In principle, the legal framework also foresees accountability mechanisms, including public feedback and the obligation to reflect the diversity of Kosovo's society. However, persistent concerns regarding political influence continue to be raised by civil society and international monitoring bodies. The European Commission's 2025 Kosovo Report notes that no progress was made in strengthening media freedom, while governance challenges within RTK, including vacancies and institutional instability, have weakened its independence in practice.²⁷ Similarly, the civil society in Kosovo highlights that editorial independence is vulnerable to political and managerial pressures, particularly in contexts where governance structures are unstable.

The funding model of RTK remains a key structural weakness. The broadcaster continues to rely primarily on annual allocations from the state budget, rather than a sustainable funding model such as licence-fee system. While foreseen as a temporary solution in the law, this arrangement has effectively become permanent. This creates financial uncertainty and potential exposure to political influence, as funding depends on yearly decisions by the Assembly.

Both the European Commission and regional media monitoring organisations emphasise that Kosovo has not yet ensured a sustainable and independent funding

24 [Kosovo* 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

25 Interview with Ehat Miftaraj, Executive Director of Kosovo Law Institute, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 14.01.2026

26 [Law No. 04/L-046 on Radio Television of Kosovo, Official Gazette](#)

27 [Kosovo* 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

mechanism for RTK²⁸. During 2025, the consequences of this fragile funding model became particularly evident, as RTK journalists and media workers were left without salaries on two separate occasions during the year. According to reporting by local and international organizations, delays in the disbursement of budget funds led to interruptions in salary payments, directly affecting employees' financial security.²⁹ These incidents further highlighted the vulnerability of the broadcaster to institutional and political inefficiencies, reinforcing concerns that the current funding system not only undermines editorial independence but also jeopardizes basic labour rights within the public service broadcaster.³⁰

Institutional governance challenges have affected the functioning of RTK in recent years. The RTK Board has experienced difficulties in operating effectively due to vacancies and delays in appointing new members following resignations in 2024. As a result, the supervisory body has at times lacked the necessary quorum to make decisions, limiting its ability to exercise effective oversight over the public broadcaster. According to the European Commission, the RTK Board lacked quorum following vacancies, limiting its ability to exercise effective oversight.³¹ This institutional paralysis further weakened accountability mechanisms within the public broadcaster. Moreover, regular consultations with civil society on programming and editorial policies remain limited. Monitoring reports indicate that engagement with the public is not systematic, and mechanisms for meaningful participation are underdeveloped. Overall, while Kosovo's legal framework aligns with European standards, practical shortcomings particularly politicised governance, unstable funding, and weak public engagement continue to undermine the effective independence and autonomy of public service media.³²

— A.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO QUALITY JOURNALISM AND MEDIA CONTENT OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Kosovo currently does not have a specific system of state subsidies designed to support the print media sector. This is closely linked to the structural transformation of the country's media landscape over the past decade. Since March 2020, Kosovo has no longer had regularly published printed newspapers, as all major outlets that previously operated in print have transitioned entirely to online platforms. Former daily newspapers such as *Koha Ditore*, *Zëri*, *Kosova Sot*, *Epoka e Re*, and *Bota Sot* now function exclusively as digital media outlets.

The disappearance of print media was accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic but primarily resulted from long-standing financial challenges, including declining readership, shrinking advertising revenues, and the high costs associated with printing and distribution. As a result, Kosovo's legal

28 Ibid.

29 [Kosovo: EFJ and partners urge government to release RTK budget and protect media freedom](#).

30 Interview with Xhemajl Rexha, Chair person of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

31 [Kosovo* 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

32 Interview with Xhemajl Rexha, Chair person of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

and policy framework does not currently provide targeted subsidies or financial incentives for print media.

More broadly, Kosovo lacks a dedicated national fund for media pluralism or public-interest journalism. Media outlets primarily depend on commercial revenues and project-based donor funding. This creates structural vulnerabilities, particularly as the digital advertising market is dominated by global platforms. The European Commission's Kosovo Report³³ underlines that financial sustainability remains a key challenge for the media sector, with no comprehensive policy in place to support independent journalism. In practice, this means that many outlets depend significantly on digital advertising markets dominated by global platforms such as Google and Meta, which capture a substantial share of online advertising revenues.

International partners continue to play an important role in supporting quality journalism and media development in Kosovo. Various initiatives funded by organizations such as the European Union, international foundations, and foreign embassies provide grants, training, and project-based support for investigative journalism, media innovation, and professional development. However, the absence of a nationally administered and transparent funding mechanism means that financial support remains fragmented and largely dependent on external assistance rather than institutionalized state policy.³⁴

Media in the languages of non-majority communities in Kosovo continue to face serious sustainability challenges and generally rely on project-based donor support rather than a stable public funding system. While the European Commission's Kosovo Report 2025 notes that the government approved the programme of the Office for Community Affairs within the Office of the Prime Minister, which allowed financial support for civil society and media representing non-majority communities,³⁵ this does not amount to a permanent or comprehensive funding mechanism. In practice, support remains fragmented and annual, rather than institutionalised. According to reportings the Office for Community Affairs states that eight media outlets benefited in 2023 and five in 2024, while for 2025 no programme had yet been approved at the time of reporting³⁶. Overall, minority-community media continue to face a lack of sustainable financial resources.

— A.5 STATE ADVERTISING IN THE PRIVATE MEDIA SECTOR

Kosovo does not have a comprehensive legal framework regulating state advertising in private media³⁷, and the practice remains limited and largely unstructured. Public institutions predominantly communicate through official websites, press releases, and social media channels rather

33 [Kosovo* 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

34 [Kosovo Vibrant Information Barometer 2024](#)

35 [Kosovo* 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

36 [Different Voices, Same Problems: The Crisis of Inter-Community Media in Kosovo – Fewer Open Doors and Reduced Funding.](#)

37 [Kosovo Vibrant Information Barometer 2024](#)

than systematically purchasing advertising space in private media. As a result, state advertising is not developed as a formal policy instrument, and no dedicated legislation defines criteria for allocation, monitoring, or reporting. While the public service broadcaster (RTK) receives regular funding from the state budget, private media rely almost entirely on commercial revenues and donor support, which increases their financial vulnerability. It is noted that the media sector continues to face sustainability challenge³⁸s, partly due to the lack of structured and transparent public funding mechanisms³⁹.

Given the limited scope of state advertising, there are few documented cases of systematic allocation of public advertising funds to private media. Monitoring reports indicate that selection procedures are not always publicly defined, making it difficult to assess whether allocations are non-discriminatory. They identify a medium risk in this area, highlighting that weak regulatory safeguards and limited transparency may enable indirect influence⁴⁰. Public institutions' spending on media-related communication is also not consistently regulated or standardised, which may affect equal access for different outlets.⁴¹ Evidence from 2025 shows that state-owned enterprises continue to act as indirect financiers of private media. According to media reports, the Post and Telecom of Kosovo signed advertising and service contracts worth over €230,000 with several outlets.⁴² Such practices demonstrate that public funds are channelled into private media through commercial agreements, in the absence of a transparent and regulated framework for state advertising

Although there is no strong evidence of systematic abuse of state advertising for political influence, the lack of rules and oversight mechanisms represents a structural risk, particularly in a context where media sustainability is fragile.

Building on the broader lack of a clear and regulated framework for state advertising, transparency regarding public spending on media-related communication also remains limited in Kosovo. Public institutions do not systematically publish data on the amounts spent on media advertising, nor do they regularly disclose which media outlets receive such funds. As a result, there is no comprehensive, publicly accessible database that would allow effective tracking of government expenditures on media promotion. It has been noted that persistent shortcomings in transparency and accountability in the media sector, including limited financial disclosure and oversight.⁴³ The IREX VIBE report further points to weak financial transparency and structural vulnerabilities affecting media sustainability.⁴⁴ Previous analyses by media monitoring organisations have consistently underlined the need for clearer reporting standards on public communication budgets and stronger safeguards to

38 [Kosovo* 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

39 Interview with Flutura Kusari, Media Lawyer, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

40 Ibid.

41 [Strengthening the Role and Capacities of Investigative Journalism in Kosovo](#)

42 [Apparently "the scandal hasn't stopped" - Telecom of Kosovo sign contracts worth over 200 thousand euros with several media.](#)

43 [Kosovo* 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

44 [Kosovo Vibrant Information Barometer 2024](#)

ensure fair allocation. Strengthening transparency requirements and establishing clear rules for the distribution of public advertising funds would enhance accountability and reduce the risk of misuse of state resources in the media sector.

— A.6 LEGAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO DEFAMATION AND THEIR APPLICATION DO NOT CREATE A CHILLING EFFECT ON JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA

Defamation in Kosovo is regulated by the Civil Law against Defamation and Insult (Law No. 02/L-65)⁴⁵, adopted in 2007. The law decriminalizes defamation and treats it as a civil matter, which broadly aligns Kosovo's legal framework with European standards on freedom of expression, particularly those developed through the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe. Importantly, the law explicitly provides that public institutions and state authorities cannot initiate defamation claims in their official capacity, which is considered an important safeguard for freedom of expression and public scrutiny of government actions. The law foresees civil compensation as the primary remedy in defamation cases and requires that damages be proportionate to the harm caused. Courts are expected to balance the protection of reputation with the public interest in open debate, especially when reporting concerns public officials or matters of public interest. Media law experts generally consider the legal provisions themselves to be largely compatible with European standards. However, concerns remain regarding the practical use of defamation lawsuits by influential individuals as a potential means of discouraging critical reporting.⁴⁶

According to data from the Kosovo Judicial Council, a total of 132 defamation lawsuits were filed in Kosovo in 2024. However, publicly available data does not specify how many of these cases were initiated by politicians or other public officials. This lack of disaggregated information makes it difficult to assess the extent to which defamation lawsuits are used by political actors or other influential individuals against journalists.

In recent years, several cases involving public figures or well-known individuals have drawn attention from media freedom organizations. For example, in 2024, a lawsuit filed by Trim Ademi against journalist Robert Bojaj was widely discussed by media organizations and civil society groups as a potential Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP), aimed at discouraging investigative reporting. Additionally, during 2025, there was a case in which a candidate for mayor of South Mitrovica threatened media outlets with legal action, invoking provisions of the Criminal Code, despite defamation being regulated as a civil matter in Kosovo. Typically, journalists make defamation lawsuits public once court proceedings begin; however, it is important to note that many judges in Kosovo have received training on media freedom standards, which is a positive development.

45 LAW NO. 02/L-65 CIVIL LAW AGAINST DEFAMATION AND INSULT <https://qzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2503&langid=2>

46 Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

More recent data for 2025 indicates a notable increase in the number of cases, with a total of 236 defamation-related lawsuits registered. The structure of these cases reveals important trends. The majority involve combined claims of defamation and insult (approximately 95 cases), followed by standalone defamation cases (around 75 cases). A significant number also include claims for financial compensation, either combined with defamation (around 30 cases) or with both defamation and insult (approximately 45 cases). A smaller subset of cases involves requests for interim or security measures (around 10 cases), while cases based solely on insult remain rare (approximately 4 cases).

This distribution suggests an increasing tendency to combine legal claims—particularly defamation, insult, and financial compensation—potentially amplifying pressure on journalists. At the same time, the absence of detailed data on the identity of claimants continues to limit a comprehensive assessment of whether such lawsuits are being strategically used to influence or deter media reporting.

Journalists generally state that the legal provisions themselves do not directly prevent investigative or critical reporting.⁴⁷ However, the increasing number of defamation claims particularly those filed by wealthy or influential individuals has raised concerns about a possible chilling effect. Even when journalists ultimately prevail in court, the time, legal costs, and uncertainty associated with such proceedings may discourage smaller media outlets or freelance journalists from pursuing sensitive investigative stories.⁴⁸

Media organizations have therefore emphasized the need for stronger safeguards against SLAPP lawsuits and for improved transparency in reporting data on defamation cases⁴⁹. Strengthening legal protection for journalists and ensuring that courts consistently apply proportionality standards remain important elements for safeguarding freedom of expression in Kosovo.

— A.7 OTHER LAWS ARE ENFORCED OBJECTIVELY AND ALLOW JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS TO WORK FREELY AND SAFELY

Kosovo's legal framework does not currently contain specific provisions designed to prevent Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). While general procedural safeguards exist within the legal system, there is no dedicated legislation aimed at identifying or dismissing abusive lawsuits intended to silence journalists or civil society actors. Media law experts have pointed out that the ongoing reform of the Civil Procedure Code⁵⁰ could provide an opportunity to introduce such safeguards. A baseline legislative analysis conducted by media lawyer Flutura Kusari highlighted that amendments to

47 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

48 Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

49 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

50 [The first draft of the Code of Civil Procedure has been completed.](#)

procedural rules could incorporate mechanisms to identify and dismiss lawsuits that primarily aim to intimidate journalists rather than address legitimate reputational harm. During the reporting period, Kosovo did not introduce new legislation specifically addressing SLAPP lawsuits⁵¹. As a result, journalists and media organizations remain vulnerable to legal actions initiated by powerful individuals that may impose financial and psychological burdens even when the claims lack strong legal merit.

No publicly known cases of arbitrary or discriminatory application of other laws were identified in Kosovo during 2025. The most recent AJK assessment for Kosovo states that no cases were reported involving the discriminatory or arbitrary application of other laws to silence journalists through excessive legal-defence burdens. It is noted that, while the legal framework still lacks special safeguards against abusive litigation, this specific form of pressure was not documented in the reporting period.

Although comprehensive official data on SLAPP cases in Kosovo is not available, media professionals report that such lawsuits can create pressure on journalists by forcing them to dedicate time and financial resources to legal defence. Focus group discussions with journalists indicate that some media professionals hesitate to publicly discuss ongoing lawsuits, particularly when claims are filed against them personally, due to concerns about reputational damage or prolonged legal procedures.⁵² According to AJK, there is an ongoing pattern of multiple defamation lawsuits against journalists, often perceived as SLAPP-type actions aimed at intimidating and financially burdening those reporting on issues of public interest, particularly corruption and abuse of power⁵³. Cases involving journalists and activists such as Ardiana Thaçi-Mehmeti, Robert Bojaj, Betim Musliu, Ehat Miftaraj, and Leonida Molliqaj have been documented in AJK's database. AJK also notes that many such lawsuits are likely underreported⁵⁴, especially when journalists are sued in their personal capacity. The European Commission's Kosovo 2025 Report⁵⁵ further confirms the issue, highlighting at least one SLAPP case and the need for Kosovo to align its legal framework with EU anti-SLAPP standards. Strengthening procedural safeguards against abusive litigation and ensuring effective legal protection for journalists would contribute to improving the overall environment for investigative reporting and public-interest journalism.

— A.8 THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF JOURNALISTS' SOURCES IS GUARANTEED IN THE LEGISLATION AND RESPECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES

The confidentiality of journalistic sources is explicitly protected under Kosovo's legal framework. Law No. 04/L-137 on the Protection of Journalism Sources⁵⁶ provides

51 Interview with Flutura Kusari, Media Lawyer, Interviewed by Getoarbë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

52 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025

53 Interview with Xhemajl Rexha, Chair person of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoarbë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

54 Ibid

55 [Kosovo* 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

56 [LAW NO. 04/L-137 ON THE PROTECTION OF JOURNALISM SOURCES.](#)

strong guarantees for journalists and media professionals to keep the identity of their sources confidential. Article 4 of the law grants journalists the right to refuse to disclose any information that could lead to the identification of a source, including documents, materials, or data⁵⁷.

The law further stipulates that disclosure of sources may only occur under exceptional circumstances and requires a court order. Such disclosure is permitted only when strictly necessary to prevent a serious threat to life or physical integrity and when the information cannot be obtained through other means. These safeguards reflect standards established by the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe, recognizing source protection as a fundamental component of freedom of expression.⁵⁸

In practice, these legal guarantees appear to be generally respected by public authorities. During the reporting period, there were no publicly documented cases in which journalists were compelled by authorities or courts to disclose their sources.

No cases were reported during the reporting period in which journalists were required by courts or public authorities to disclose their sources. Similarly, there were no recorded instances of sanctions imposed on journalists for refusing to reveal the identity of a source.

Media monitoring organizations have continued to emphasize the importance of preserving these protections, noting that the absence of such cases indicates a relatively consistent respect for legal safeguards in this area. At the same time, continued vigilance is considered necessary⁵⁹ to ensure that these standards are upheld in future cases, particularly in sensitive investigations.

According to media professionals and monitoring organizations, investigative journalists in Kosovo generally feel able to seek access to and maintain confidential contacts with sources, including in cases related to corruption, organized crime, and public accountability.⁶⁰ The legal framework protecting source confidentiality is viewed as a key factor enabling such work and maintaining trust between journalists and whistleblowers⁶¹.

While journalists sometimes express broader concerns related to pressures, threats, or lengthy judicial processes when reporting on sensitive issues, these concerns are not specifically linked to the legal provisions governing source protection⁶². Overall, the existing framework is considered supportive of investigative journalism and does not create significant barriers to maintaining confidential sources.

57 Interview with Mexhide Demolli Nimani, Executive Director of Levizja FOL, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 14.01.2026.

58 [A handbook for legal practitioners: Protecting the Right to Freedom of Expression Under the European Convention on Human Rights, PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION UNDER THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS](#), Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska.

59 Interview with Mexhide Demolli Nimani, Executive Director of Levizja FOL, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 14.01.2026.

60 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

61 Interview with Mexhide Demolli Nimani, Executive Director of Levizja FOL, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 14.01.2026.

62 Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

— A.9 JOURNALISTS ARE FREE TO PURSUIT THEIR PROFESSION AND TO ESTABLISH, JOIN AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR ASSOCIATIONS

Journalists in Kosovo are not required to obtain a state license in order to practice their profession. The legal framework governing media and freedom of expression does not impose licensing requirements, which is considered an important safeguard for media freedom and independence. During 2025, there were no legislative initiatives or public proposals aimed at introducing mandatory licensing schemes for journalists. Media professionals are therefore able to operate freely without formal authorization from state institutions.

In practice, journalists are generally recognized as media professionals by public authorities when performing their duties⁶³. While journalists are often expected to carry identification issued by their respective media outlets particularly when covering protests, elections, or large public events, this requirement is practical rather than legal. During the reporting period, no systematic cases were recorded in which journalists were denied access to events or public spaces solely due to the absence of accreditation.

Journalists in Kosovo are free to establish and join professional associations. The Association of Journalists of Kosovo remains the main professional body representing journalists and advocating for media freedom and safety. During 2025, there were no reported cases of pressure or interference by public authorities, media owners, or other actors attempting to force journalists to join specific associations. Similarly, no evidence was identified of parallel or “fake” media organizations aimed at undermining the role of established journalistic associations. Professional initiatives, including the Women Journalists Network of Kosovo, continue to strengthen representation and support within the sector.

— A.10 RIGHT TO ACCESS OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

The right to access official documents in Kosovo is regulated by Law No. 06/L-081 on Access to Public Documents⁶⁴, which guarantees journalists and the public the right to obtain information held by public institutions. Journalists frequently rely on access-to-information requests, particularly in investigative reporting on public procurement, government spending, and public administration. However, implementation remains uneven. Delays in responses and incomplete disclosures are common, often due to limited administrative capacity within institutions.

Civil society monitoring has also noted that institutions sometimes fail to provide adequate legal justification when refusing access, reducing the effectiveness of the law in practice. This is further illustrated by practical cases reported

63 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

64 [LAW NO. 06/L-081 ON ACCESS TO PUBLIC DOCUMENTS](#)

in local media. For example, an investigation by KALLXO.com showed that journalist Arbrita Uka had to wait around three months and submit multiple formal requests, including complaints to the Information and Privacy Agency, in order to obtain basic information from the Ministry of Education regarding the malfunctioning of a diploma recognition platform. The case demonstrates that even non-sensitive information may be subject to procedural delays and administrative barriers, limiting timely access to public information.⁶⁵

Journalists have raised concerns regarding inconsistent and selective communication practices by public institutions.⁶⁶ Government bodies often rely on controlled communication channels such as official statements and social media, limiting direct engagement with journalists. Some media professionals perceive that access to information or communication opportunities may be uneven, although systematic evidence of formal discrimination remains limited.

Court proceedings in Kosovo are generally open to the public, and journalists are typically able to attend and report on hearings. Restrictions may be applied in specific cases to protect vulnerable individuals or sensitive information, such as cases involving minors or trafficking victims. These limitations are consistent with international standards balancing transparency and privacy.

Access to parliamentary proceedings is generally ensured. The Assembly of Kosovo allows accredited journalists to attend plenary sessions and committee meetings, which are also broadcast online. While journalists have occasionally reported practical constraints, such as limited space within parliamentary premises, no formal restrictions preventing media coverage of parliamentary work were identified.

Overall, Kosovo's legal framework on access to information is solid, but more consistent implementation, improved institutional capacity, and more open communication practices are needed to fully ensure transparency and equal access for all media.

65 [LIMITED ACCESS INTERFERES WITH TRANSPARENCY.](#)

66 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

B. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

— B.1 THE JOB POSITIONS OF JOURNALISTS ARE STABLE AND PROTECTED AT THE WORKPLACE

In Kosovo, the legal framework formally guarantees labour rights for journalists through the Labour Law⁶⁷, which requires written employment contracts and provides protections related to working hours, salaries, social contributions, and workplace safety. In practice, however, the stability of journalists' employment remains uneven across the media sector. While journalists working in larger media outlets or public institutions are more likely to have formal employment contracts, journalists employed by smaller private media or online portals often report short-term contracts, freelance arrangements, or irregular contractual conditions, which can weaken job security and access to labour protections⁶⁸.

Working conditions in the media sector continue to be challenging. Journalists frequently report long working hours, high workload, and job insecurity, particularly in smaller private outlets with limited financial resources. Another concern relates to salary levels, which remain relatively low compared to other professions requiring similar education levels. Average salaries for journalists in Kosovo are generally estimated to range between 400 and 700 euros per month⁶⁹, depending on the media outlet and the journalist's experience. While salaries in larger media organisations tend to be paid regularly, journalists working for smaller outlets have reported delays in salary payments or irregular payment practices, as well as insufficient social security contributions.⁷⁰

There is no comprehensive trade union representing journalists across the private media sector in Kosovo. The only existing unions operate within the public broadcaster, RTK. In private media, journalists remain largely without formal union representation, and it is not known that any private media outlet has supported journalists in establishing a trade union or collective bargaining. As a result, no sector-wide collective agreements exist to protect labour rights of journalists working in private media. Their employment conditions are usually regulated through individual contracts, which limits collective protection of labour rights. In practice, AJK often plays an important role in supporting journalists in the private sector, mainly through legal assistance and advocacy in labour-related disputes.⁷¹

— B.2 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE PRIVATE MEDIA

Editorial independence in Kosovo's private media is formally recognised but remains uneven in practice. Some larger media

67 [LAW NO.03/L -212 ON LABOUR.](#)

68 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

69 Internal needs assessment document and survey with 92 women journalists.

70 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

71 [Yll Zekaj continues legal support for AJK and the journalists' community.](#)

outlets have adopted internal organisational structures intended to separate editorial decision-making from management and commercial departments. These arrangements typically foresee that editorial policies are determined by editors and newsroom leadership rather than by business management. Compared to previous years, awareness of the importance of editorial independence has increased, particularly due to ongoing public debate on media freedom and professional standards.⁷² However, in practice these internal rules are not always consistently respected, especially in smaller media outlets where financial pressures and ownership influence can directly affect editorial decisions⁷³.

Regarding professional standards, most private media outlets in Kosovo do not maintain their own internal codes of ethics, but instead rely on the Code of Ethics for Print and Online Media⁷⁴, adopted by the Press Council of Kosovo and widely recognised across the media sector. For audiovisual media, professional conduct is regulated through the Code of Conduct for Audiovisual Media Service Providers, adopted by the Independent Media Commission (IMC/KPM), which establishes standards for editorial responsibility, protection of minors, and balanced reporting.⁷⁵ At the same time, media outlets that receive grants or project funding from international organisations often adopt additional internal regulations and policies in order to comply with donor requirements. These commonly include gender equality policies, sexual harassment prevention policies, anti-discrimination rules, and workplace integrity standards, as well as procedures related to editorial transparency and ethical reporting⁷⁶. In addition, professional organisations such as AJK, often in cooperation with international partners and media development organisations, work to promote awareness and implementation of existing ethical standards⁷⁷. Through training programmes, guidelines, and advocacy initiatives, these organisations aim to strengthen adherence to the established codes of ethics and professional standards across the media sector.

Despite the existence of these professional standards, journalists continue to report various forms of pressure affecting editorial independence. The most common forms include editorial interference by media owners or senior managers, pressure to adjust coverage in line with political or business interests, and influence from advertisers or external stakeholders. In some cases, journalists report pressure to avoid certain topics, soften critical reporting, or prioritise content that serves commercial or political interests.⁷⁸ Economic vulnerability of many media outlets further increases the risk of such pressures, particularly in smaller newsrooms that rely heavily on advertising revenue or political patronage.

72 [Launch of the Editorial Policy Guideline.](#)

73 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

74 [CODE OF ETHICS OF PCK.](#)

75 [KKPM-2016-03 KODI I ETIKËS PËR OFRUESIT E SHËRBIMEVE MEDIALE NË REPUBLIKËN E KOSOVËS](#)<https://kpm-ks.org/cmsapi/content/media/5233D8DD-5822-4265-8DB4-34CB1FD549FC.pdf>

76 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

77 [Editorial Policy Guide.](#)

78 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

— B.3 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

The ethical principles and professional standards of journalism within Kosovo's Public Service Media

RTK are governed by internal regulations. Law No. 04/L-046 on Radio Television of Kosovo outlines that RTK's editorial policy must be independent, fair, professional, objective, balanced, and impartial.⁷⁹ Additionally, it operates under its internal "Professional Standards and Ethical Principles of Journalism at RTK⁸⁰," while its journalists are also bound by Kosovo's broader professional frameworks for audiovisual media. Formally, the framework exists and journalists generally try to work within it. In practice, however, compliance problems in 2025 came less from rank-and-file journalists and more from management interference, including punitive action against RTK editors.⁸¹

The Law on RTK requires the broadcaster to serve the public interest and foresees governance structures meant to protect editorial independence. In practice, those safeguards were not consistently respected in 2025. The year exposed the weakness of those internal protections, especially when management took actions against editors and when the broadcaster operated amid governance and funding instability.⁸²

The most common pressure is indirect political and financial pressure, especially through budget control, delayed funding, governance instability, and influence over management structures. In 2025, this was compounded by salary delays, a weak board situation, and broader attempts to shape the internal climate at RTK. Pressure was therefore exercised less through open censorship and more through financial leverage and politically influenced managerial decisions.⁸³⁸⁴

The clearest example was the RTK funding and salary crisis in August⁸⁵ and November⁸⁶ of 2025. RTK employees were left without salaries twice, which turned funding into a direct pressure point affecting the whole broadcaster. At the same time, AJK publicly condemned the punitive measures against RTK editors in March 2025, as well as the arbitrarily removal of 6 journalists from the screen⁸⁷⁸⁸. Together, these developments showed how financial dependence and politically sensitive management decisions can undermine editorial independence across the entire public broadcaster.

79 Republic of Kosovo. [Law No. 04/L-046 on Radio Television of Kosovo](#).

80 [Professional Standards and Ethical Principles of Journalism](#).

81 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

82 Ibid.

83 [Kosovo: EFJ joins urgent call for adequate budget allocation for public broadcaster RTK](#),

84 [AJK Disappointed by Government's Failure to Allocate RTK Budget from Savings](#).

85 [RTK Employees Two Weeks Unpaid — Government Urged to Release Budget](#).

86 [Kosovo: EFJ joins urgent call for adequate budget allocation for public broadcaster RTK](#).

87 [AJK strongly condemns arbitrary removal of six RTK journalists from the screen](#).

88 [RTK Management Statement Amounts to Public Intimidation of Six Editors](#).

— B.4 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE NON-PROFIT MEDIA SECTOR

The non-profit media sector in Kosovo has been expanding, although it remains considerably smaller than the private media market. While there is still no official registry specifically listing non-profit media outlets, several established organisations operate within this model. Among the most prominent are K2.0, BIRNand Kallxo, Betimi për Drejtësi, and Prishtina Insight, which focus primarily on investigative journalism and in-depth reporting. Other platforms such as Sbunker mainly produce analytical and opinion-based content. Additionally, outlets like KoSSev, Romano Avazo, and Radio Gorazdevac provide media services for non-majority communities, contributing to broader media pluralism and representation in Kosovo. Overall, the growing presence of NGO-based media initiatives reflects structural challenges faced by private outlets, particularly financial sustainability. Compared with commercial media, non-profit organisations generally have greater access to donor grants and institutional funding, which has encouraged the gradual development of this sector despite its still smaller scale relative to the private media market.

Compared to much of the private media sector, leading non-profit media organisations in Kosovo generally operate under internal codes of conduct and organisational statutes designed to protect editorial independence and uphold professional standards. It is widely perceived that non-profit media organisations demonstrate a higher level of compliance with these internal standards, largely due to donor requirements and strong institutional oversight. As a result, journalists working in the non-profit sector are often better informed about editorial policies, ethical standards, and professional safeguards than their counterparts in other media sectors.⁸⁹ A similar level of awareness is also observed among freelance journalists, who frequently collaborate with non-profit media organisations and international projects that require adherence to strict editorial and ethical frameworks.⁹⁰

In 2025, the reduction and withdrawal of certain international funding streams became particularly problematic for both non-profit media and civil society organisations more broadly. This lack of sustainable funding has become one of the main challenges for the sector. Despite their continuous difficulties which include lawsuits, smear campaigns and political attacks, non-profit media continue to remain one of the key pillars of independent and investigative journalism in Kosovo.⁹¹

— B.5 FREEDOM OF JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWS PRODUCTION PROCESS

Journalists in Kosovo generally claim that they have formal freedom to propose and select stories, particularly in larger

89 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

90 Ibid.

91 Interview with Xhemajl Rexha, Chair person of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

newsrooms and independent outlets. However, the level of freedom in shaping narratives and emphasizing specific aspects of a story remains somewhat limited in practice. Journalists tend to be targeted more, especially when reporting on politically sensitive issues or topics related to powerful economic actors⁹². While explicit editorial restrictions are rarely imposed, newsroom priorities are often influenced by broader editorial policies, audience expectations, and ownership structures.

Journalists generally acknowledge that financial and commercial interests of media owners aim to influence newsroom priorities, even if such influence is rarely expressed through direct instructions. These influences are often indirect, shaping decisions about which topics receive greater attention or which stories are pursued more cautiously. Despite this, journalists report that they attempt to maintain professional integrity and navigate these pressures while continuing to report on issues of public interest.⁹³ Some journalists also state that, when confronted with serious ethical conflicts, they prefer to change workplaces rather than compromise professional standards, which reflects a continued commitment to independent reporting despite structural constraints.⁹⁴

Direct editorial censorship is rarely reported openly, but self-censorship remains a concern within Kosovo's media environment. Some journalists admit that they occasionally avoid certain topics, while the fear of losing employment, combined with a competitive media market and relatively low job stability, contributes to a climate where journalists may prefer to act cautiously rather than risk professional repercussions⁹⁵. As a result, even without explicit pressure from editors, the broader media environment can lead to indirect self-censorship and more restrained reporting.

— B.6 WORKING POSITION OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS

Women journalists in Kosovo generally operate under similar formal employment conditions as their male colleagues, particularly in larger media outlets where contractual arrangements and newsroom structures apply equally to all employees. However, women tend to hold more low- and mid-level positions, while their male colleagues are more frequently represented in mid- and senior-level roles, especially in editorial leadership and managerial positions.⁹⁶ New findings from the Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo indicate that a gender pay gap does exist within the media sector.⁹⁷ Although salaries in most media outlets are formally linked to factors such as position, experience, and seniority, these findings suggest that gender also indirectly influences salary levels, largely because men more often occupy higher-ranking and better-paid positions within media organisations. At the same time,

92 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

93 Ibid.

94 Internal needs assessment document and survey with 92 women journalists

95 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

96 [Position and safety of women journalists in Kosovo.](#)

97 Interview with Gentiana Begolli Pustina, Member of Advisory Panel of Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoarbe Mulliqi, 20.01.2026.

when it comes to editorial assignments and reporting topics, women journalists are generally not excluded from covering any specific areas of reporting, including politics and investigations.

Women journalists are increasingly visible in Kosovo's media landscape and occupy a significant number of roles within newsrooms (65%). However, men still dominate many senior editorial and managerial positions, particularly at the level of editors-in-chief, media owners, and top newsroom management.⁹⁸ Although there has been gradual progress in recent years, women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions compared to their overall presence in the journalism profession.⁹⁹ Initiatives by professional organisations, including the Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo, have contributed to raising awareness about gender equality and encouraging greater participation of women in leadership roles within media institutions.

Women journalists in Kosovo report experiencing specific gender-based pressures and harassment, particularly in online spaces. Female journalists (as well as activists) are more frequently targeted with gendered insults, misogynistic comments, and threats on social media, often linked to their public visibility or reporting on sensitive issues¹⁰⁰. These attacks can create an intimidating environment and may discourage women from participating fully in public debates. In addition to online harassment, some women journalists report facing stereotypes, discrimination, or dismissive attitudes within professional environments¹⁰¹. Despite these challenges, networks and professional associations continue to advocate for stronger protections and greater recognition of the challenges faced by women journalists in Kosovo.

98 [Position and safety of women journalists in Kosovo.](#)

99 Interview with Gentiana Begolli Pustina, Member of Advisory Panel of Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 20.01.2026.

100 [Jo i bjen JO, edhe online!](#)

101 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

C. JOURNALISTS' SAFETY

— C.1 JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ACTORS HAVE ACCESS TO IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES WHEN THEY ARE THREATENED

Kosovo has not yet established a dedicated institutional mechanism such as a hotline or emergency contact point specifically for journalists to report threats, hate speech, or serious risks to their safety. As in previous years, journalists primarily report such incidents through the general reporting mechanisms of the Kosovo Police, including emergency numbers and local police stations. In practice, journalists also frequently contact the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, which documents incidents, provides support to journalists, and refers cases to relevant institutions. This situation remains largely unchanged compared to 2024, when the absence of specialized reporting mechanisms for journalists was also identified in monitoring reports on media freedom and journalists' safety.

According to data collected by AJK and the SafeJournalists Network, 69 cases of attacks, threats, and pressures against journalists were recorded in Kosovo between 1 January and 31 December 2025. However, official institutional information was available for only 13 of these cases, indicating a continued discrepancy between cases documented by journalists' organizations and those officially recorded by institutions. A similar gap was observed in 2024, when 53 incidents were documented by AJK, while the Kosovo Police officially registered 12 cases. When incidents are formally reported, law-enforcement institutions generally undertake measures such as opening police investigations, referring cases to the prosecution, identifying suspects, and in some cases making arrests. For example, in the case of threats against journalist Vehbi Kajtazi, police arrested a suspect who was subsequently detained for 48 hours. Authorities also arrested a suspect following online threats directed at journalists from Klan Kosova. These examples indicate that institutions may react promptly when threats are reported and formally processed.

There were no publicly documented cases in 2025 where a competent institution refused to accept a report submitted by a journalist or media outlet. However, structural challenges remain, including inconsistent institutional classification of cases involving journalists, delays in judicial proceedings, and the absence of specialized reporting and monitoring mechanisms for threats against media workers. As a result, journalists' associations continue to play a crucial role in documenting incidents and facilitating communication with institutions responsible for the protection of journalists' safety.

— **C.2 JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS
(WHOSE LIVES OR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY ARE AT
REAL AND IMMEDIATE RISK) HAVE ACCESS TO
SPECIAL PROTECTION OR SAFETY MECHANISMS**

Kosovo does not have a specific national protection mechanism designed exclusively for journalists who face serious threats to their safety. Journalists who experience life-threatening risks may rely on the general protection mechanisms available through the Kosovo Police, including police intervention, temporary protection measures, or criminal investigation procedures. In exceptional cases, police may take operational measures such as increased monitoring, risk-based response, or temporary protective actions if credible threats are identified. However, these measures are not part of a specialized protection programme tailored for journalists, but rather part of the general law-enforcement framework that applies to all citizens. Monitoring reports on media freedom indicate that while the legal framework allows institutions to respond to threats against journalists, Kosovo lacks an institutionalized safety mechanism specifically designed to protect journalists who are exposed to risks due to investigative reporting, particularly on corruption, organised crime, or politically sensitive topics.

Furthermore, risk assessments are generally conducted within the framework of standard police investigations when a threat is reported. In such cases, the Kosovo Police evaluate the credibility and seriousness of the threat and determine the necessary operational measures. However, this process is not standardized through a specific protocol focused on journalists or media workers, and there is no permanent institutional body tasked with conducting specialized safety risk assessments for journalists.

In practice, journalists' associations and civil society organisations play a significant role in providing support to journalists who face threats or attacks. The Association of Journalists of Kosovo, for example, documents incidents, provides legal and professional assistance, and cooperates with institutions to ensure cases are reported and followed up. In addition, regional initiatives such as the SafeJournalists Network and other regional and international partners provide monitoring, advocacy, and in some cases legal support for journalists facing threats and other forms of violations. International organisations and media freedom groups also contribute through advocacy, monitoring, and emergency support mechanisms. While these forms of assistance can be provided relatively quickly, they operate primarily through civil society structures rather than through a formalized state protection system dedicated to journalists.

— C.3 FEMALE JOURNALISTS HAVE ACCESS TO LEGAL MEASURES AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS WHEN FACED WITH GENDER-BASED THREATS, HARASSMENT, AND VIOLENCE

Kosovo has incorporated the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) directly into its constitutional framework. Following the 2020 constitutional amendment, the Convention became directly applicable in Kosovo and has precedence over national legislation in cases of conflict.¹⁰² The legal framework addressing gender-based violence includes the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and Violence against Women, the Criminal Code, and relevant provisions within the Law on Gender Equality. These laws foresee preventive and protective measures such as protection orders, restraining orders, emergency protection measures, criminal prosecution of perpetrators, and institutional obligations to support victims.¹⁰³ Although these mechanisms apply to all women, including female journalists, the legislation does not include specific provisions addressing gender-based harassment or threats targeting women journalists, particularly in online environments where such attacks frequently occur.

Kosovo provides state-funded free legal aid services through the Free Legal Aid Agency, which offers legal assistance to victims of gender-based violence, including women facing threats or harassment. Additionally, institutions such as the Agency for Gender Equality, the Victim Advocacy and Assistance Office, and shelters operated by civil society organizations provide information, legal advice, and psychosocial support to victims.¹⁰⁴ These services are accessible to all women who meet eligibility criteria and may also be used by female journalists who experience gender-based threats. However, available research indicates that female journalists often rely on professional associations or civil society organizations for initial support and guidance, rather than immediately contacting state institutions.

Findings from continuous research conducted by the Association of Journalists of Kosovo and the Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo indicate that female journalists frequently experience gender-based harassment, intimidation, and online abuse, particularly when reporting on sensitive topics. Many attacks include sexist insults, threats, and attempts to discredit their professional work. However, the reports also highlight that many incidents remain underreported, partly due to a lack of trust in institutional responses and the perception that online abuse is often normalised.¹⁰⁵ Research based on focus groups and surveys with women journalists in Kosovo shows that journalists often prefer to report incidents first to AJK or the NWJK, which functions as a

102 KLI, [The Istanbul Convention in the verdicts of courts in Kosovo](#), 2023.

103 [LAW NO.03/L -182 ON PROTECTION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE](#).

104 [AGJENCIA PËR NDIHMË JURIDIKE FALAS](#).

105 Interview with Gentiana Begolli Pustina, Member of Advisory Panel of Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoar bë Mulliqi, 20.01.2026.

safe space for sharing experiences and receiving professional support. While some cases have been reported to the police or other institutions, the findings indicate that institutional responses remain inconsistent, particularly in cases of online harassment and gender-based hate speech.¹⁰⁶ As a result, journalists' associations and civil society organisations continue to play a key role in documenting cases, advocating for accountability, and supporting affected journalists.

— C.4 THE PRACTICE OF REGULAR PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF THREATS AND ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED

The available findings do not suggest that Kosovo's state institutions and main political parties have established a regular, consistent, and institutionalised practice of publicly condemning threats and attacks against journalists. Rather, reactions appear selective and case-driven.¹⁰⁷ The broader pattern described in recent analyses is one of deteriorating media freedom, in which criticism of attacks on journalists is overshadowed by political conflict with the media, polarised narratives, and shrinking civic space. The political communication environment is marked more by hardline and security-first framing than by a sustained democratic message in support of journalists and independent media.

Practice does not point to a stable practice whereby public officials systematically and explicitly condemn attacks on journalists in a way that would clearly discourage future perpetrators. On the contrary, the dominant trend identified in the sources is that journalists are increasingly exposed to smear campaigns, political pressure, and delegitimising rhetoric. According to the European Western Balkans analysis, Kosovo's decline in media freedom has been linked to smear campaigns against journalists, the government's boycott of several private media outlets during the 2025 election, and an approach that sought to "discipline" rather than engage the media.¹⁰⁸ ARTICLE 19 likewise notes repeated appeals by the Association of Journalists of Kosovo to Prime Minister Albin Kurti and Vetëvendosje to stop campaigns aimed at intimidating journalists.¹⁰⁹

Evidence suggests that the political and media climate in Kosovo can undermine journalists' sense of safety and freedom, particularly for those covering politically sensitive issues. Journalists and media organisations report that pressure may take indirect forms, such as restricted access to information, exclusion from official events, or attempts to discredit critical reporting.¹¹⁰ Investigative journalism is particularly vulnerable to pressure from powerful political actors. Analyses of political and media narratives in Kosovo indicate that journalists operate in an environment characterised by polarised

106 Ibid.

107 Interview with Xhemajl Rexha, Chair person of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

108 European Western Balkans, [The fall of media freedom in Kosovo](#).

109 [ARTICLE 19, Media Landscape Analysis – Kosovo](#).

110 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

public discourse, opaque institutional communication, and aggressive online networks, which together may contribute to pressure, intimidation, and self-censorship among media professionals.¹¹¹ At the same time, media organisations note that political actors and public officials significantly influence the tone of public debate about journalists. According to the view frequently expressed by representatives of journalists' associations, the language and behaviour of political leaders can either contribute to the protection of journalists or indirectly legitimise attacks and hostility toward them.¹¹² In this context, monitoring by the Association of Journalists of Kosovo has documented repeated instances of hostile rhetoric toward media by public officials, including Sami Kurteshi, a member of the Central Election Commission (KQZ), who has been identified as a prominent source of verbal attacks against journalists.¹¹³¹¹⁴

— C.5 POLICE AUTHORITIES ARE SENSITIVE TO JOURNALISTS' PROTECTION ISSUE

There is evidence of targeted training and growing awareness, but not yet of a fully systematic approach across the police.¹¹⁵ In 2024–2025, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo organised joint crisis-reporting trainings for journalists and Kosovo Police, aimed at improving mutual understanding of roles, rights, and safety in high-risk situations.¹¹⁶ This suggests institutional willingness to strengthen police sensitivity to journalists' work. However, the wider media-freedom environment described by various reports and internal assessments of AJK show that public institutions still operate in a polarised and pressurised climate, which limits confidence that international standards are uniformly understood and applied in practice.¹¹⁷

There is no clearly public, stand-alone police protocol in Kosovo specifically dedicated to prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or physical attacks on journalists in Kosovo. Still, practical steps have been taken through cooperation with media actors. OSCE-supported training, safety guidance for reporting from protests, and continued engagement with AJK indicate that some operational awareness exists.¹¹⁸

Similar to the situation reported in 2024, two cases involving police interference with journalists' work were recorded in 2025. These incidents appear to be isolated cases rather than a systematic pattern, but they nevertheless raised concerns within the media community. Both cases were immediately reported to the Kosovo Police and the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo for review. One case involved the obstruction of TeVe1 team in Zvečan.¹¹⁹ Another case concerned journalists from Radio Gorazdevac, who reported difficulties while covering

111 Interview with Xhemajl Rexha, Chair person of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

112 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12–13.12.2025.

113 [AJK condemns the scandalous, threatening, and inciting language of the member of the CEC, Sami Kurteshi.](#)

114 [Other threats towards media outlets and organizations, 04.12.2025.](#)

115 Interview with Xhemajl Rexha, Chair person of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

116 [OSCE Mission in Kosovo trains journalists and police officers on crisis reporting.](#)

117 Interview with Xhemajl Rexha, Chair person of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

118 [Meeting with Kosovo Police representatives.](#)

119 [Other threats towards journalists Tëvë1, Zvečan, 16.10.2025.](#)

an event in a village near Peja¹²⁰. The most pressing case concerned the close protection of President Vjosa Osmani, in which Jetmir Muji, a cameraman for Paparaci, was arrested and detained at the Qendra Police Station in Prishtina for filming members of the President's close protection unit in front of her daughters' private school.¹²¹ While these incidents were addressed through institutional channels, they highlight the importance of ensuring that police officers consistently respect the role of journalists and their right to report freely. Although such cases remain limited in number, they demonstrate that continued awareness and training of police officers regarding journalists' rights and safety remain necessary, particularly during field reporting situations. These incidents are considered isolated, but they underline the importance of preventing similar situations in the future

In general, cooperation between the Kosovo Police and journalists' associations remained constructive during the reporting period. Communication channels between the police and the Association of Journalists of Kosovo continued to function, particularly in cases related to journalists' safety and field reporting. This cooperation has also included joint discussions and training aimed at improving mutual understanding of journalists' work and safety concerns.¹²² Overall, the police have shown a generally positive willingness to cooperate with journalists' organisations, although isolated incidents involving journalists indicate that continued dialogue and awareness-raising remain important.¹²³¹²⁴

— C.6 SPECIALISED INVESTIGATION UNITS AND/OR OFFICERS ARE EQUIPPED WITH RELEVANT EXPERTISE FOR INVESTIGATING ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Coordination mechanisms among key institutions have been established to address threats and attacks against journalists, with the objective of strengthening monitoring and institutional response. Designated coordinators within the Kosovo Police and the Prosecution continued to handle cases involving journalists, particularly when they were victims of threats or attacks. The Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK) monitored developments on a biannual basis and coordinated with the Kosovo Police, the Prosecution, and the Kosovo Judicial Council to harmonise data. Nevertheless, the justice system still lacks a specialised unit dedicated exclusively to journalist safety and challenges persist in terms of institutional capacities, resources, specialised training, and overall coordination.

Progress has been achieved in strengthening institutional cooperation; however, important gaps persist in the understanding and handling of criminal offences related to violence against journalists. Formal guidelines or

120 [Obstruction of Journalist Damjan Portić, Peja, 25.06.2025.](#)

121 [Other threats to journalists, Jetmir Muji, 10.09.2025.](#)

122 [Meeting with Kosovo Police representatives.](#)

123 Interview with Xhemajl Rexha, Chair person of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 28.12.2025.

124 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

dedicated protocols to support the effective investigation and prosecution of such cases are still absent.¹²⁵ The lack of a structured response mechanism, together with limited awareness among law enforcement authorities, continues to weaken the protection of journalists' safety. Although initiatives aimed at improving the situation, including enhanced inter-institutional coordination, are underway, a clear and operational framework has yet to be established.

Procedural delays and the misclassification of offences continue to undermine accountability and discourage journalists from pursuing legal remedies. Although the Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo¹²⁶ provides clear deadlines for case handling, delays remain frequent, particularly in cases involving journalists. It has been noted that attacks are not always legally qualified in accordance with the seriousness of the offence, often leading to milder charges and limited accountability.¹²⁷ Investigations are often slow and incomplete, which further discourages affected journalists from seeking legal redress.¹²⁸ Despite increased institutional attention, a certain level of impunity persists, largely due to weak investigations and the misclassification of cases¹²⁹, especially in sensitive or politically exposed situations.

— C.7 INVESTIGATIONS OF SERIOUS PHYSICAL ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CARRIED OUT EFFICIENTLY (INDEPENDENTLY, THOROUGHLY AND PROMPTLY)

In Kosovo, investigations of attacks against journalists are conducted primarily by the Kosovo Police and the State Prosecutor's Office, institutions that are formally independent from political actors and other potential perpetrators.¹³⁰

When serious threats or attacks occur, cases are generally referred to the competent prosecution offices for further investigation. However, media freedom organisations and journalists' associations have noted that investigations do not always fully examine the broader context of attacks, including potential links between threats and the victim's journalistic work. Legal monitoring organisations have also raised concerns regarding the legal qualification of offences. According to monitoring conducted by the Kosovo Law Institute (KLI) through its platform "Betimi për Drejtësi", incorrect legal qualification or under-classification of offences may weaken accountability and fail to reflect the gravity of attacks against journalists.¹³¹ This can ultimately limit the ability of investigations to address the underlying causes of violence and intimidation targeting media professionals.

In several cases, law-enforcement authorities have reacted relatively quickly after incidents involving journalists were publicly reported. Police investigations are usually opened

125 Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

126 [CRIMINAL No. 04/L-123 PROCEDURE CODE](#).

127 Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

128 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025.

129 Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

130 Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

131 Interview with Ehat Miftaraj, Executive Director of Kosovo Law Institute, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 14.01.2026.

after complaints are filed, and suspects may be questioned or detained when sufficient evidence exists¹³². Nevertheless, available monitoring indicates that many cases remain pending for extended periods, which raises concerns about the overall efficiency of investigative procedures and the ability of institutions to ensure accountability in a timely manner.

— C.8 JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE EFFICIENTLY PROTECTED FROM VARIOUS FORMS OF ONLINE HARASSMENT

Kosovo's legal framework addresses online harassment primarily through provisions of the Criminal Code and related legislation. Several criminal offences may apply to conduct occurring in the digital environment, including harassment, sexual harassment, threat or intimidation, privacy violations, and incitement of hatred.

In addition to criminal-law provisions, victims may rely on civil remedies related to protection of dignity, privacy, and reputation, as well as protective measures available under legislation addressing domestic violence and victim protection. The Criminal Procedure Code also guarantees procedural rights for victims, including the right to information, protection, and participation in proceedings. Despite these mechanisms, certain forms of contemporary digital abuse such as coordinated online harassment campaigns, cyberstalking, doxxing, or technology-facilitated intimidation, are not yet comprehensively regulated as distinct criminal offences. KLI's research and policy reports on access to justice and protection of victims of violence highlight that legal and institutional responses to technology-facilitated abuse remain fragmented and require further strengthening in order to effectively address the evolving digital environment.¹³³

Journalists reported incidents including threatening messages, coordinated harassment campaigns on social media, gender-based insults, smear campaigns, and attempts to discredit journalists' professional credibility. Female journalists were particularly exposed to sexist and misogynistic comments, hate speech, and threats of violence in online spaces¹³⁴. These incidents were most often observed after journalists published critical reporting related to politics, corruption, or other sensitive public-interest topics. One such case concerns Xhemajl Rexha, journalist and Chair of AJK, who reported a series of online threats to the police in 2025 after being targeted by a smear campaign in May of the same year.

Institutional responses to online harassment against journalists in Kosovo remain limited. The case of Rexha demonstrates a degree of institutional willingness to act; however, the nature of online threats continues to pose a structural challenge. Nevertheless, two of the perpetrators were identified, and legal

132 Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

133 Interview with Ehat Miftaraj, Executive Director of Kosovo Law Institute, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 14.01.2026.

134 Interview with Gentiana Begolli Pustina, Member of Advisory Panel of Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 20.01.2026.

proceedings have been initiated against them, while efforts to identify others are ongoing.¹³⁵ When incidents are reported, the Kosovo Police may open investigations and refer cases to the State Prosecutor's Office, particularly when threats, intimidation, or incitement to hatred are involved. Journalists may also seek assistance from the Victim Advocacy and Assistance Office, which provides support and information to victims during criminal proceedings. In practice, institutional measures mainly involve receiving complaints and assessing whether the reported conduct qualifies as a criminal offence. However, investigations remain difficult, especially when harassment originates from anonymous accounts or coordinated social media campaigns. Overall, monitoring indicates that measures taken by institutions to address online harassment against journalists remain insufficient, and stronger cooperation between authorities, media organisations, and civil society is needed to improve responses to digital threats.

— C.9 INVESTIGATIONS OF ALL TYPES OF ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CARRIED OUT TRANSPARENTLY

Kosovo's legal framework continues to formally guarantee victims, including journalists, the right to participate in criminal investigations and receive information about the progress of their cases. The Criminal Procedure Code No. 08/L-032, particularly Article 63¹³⁶, obliges authorities, including the police and the prosecution, to provide victims with timely and accurate information during criminal proceedings. Journalists who are victims of criminal offences may also seek assistance from the Victim Advocacy and Assistance Office, operating under the Office of the Chief State Prosecutor, which is mandated to support victims and ensure that their procedural rights are respected.

However, practical implementation of these guarantees remains limited. Although victims formally have the right to access information about the progress of investigations and to submit evidence, journalists frequently report that communication with investigative authorities remains irregular and often depends on individual initiative¹³⁷. Updates about the status of cases are not always provided proactively, and access to case files or detailed procedural information may require repeated requests.

Communication with the public regarding cases involving journalists is usually handled by the spokespersons of prosecution offices and courts, in accordance with internal instructions from the assigned prosecutor or judge. While the legal framework governing the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council and the Kosovo Judicial Council provides for transparency and public access to information, regular and detailed updates about investigations and court proceedings involving journalists remain inconsistent in practice.

135 Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Getoarë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

136 [CODE NO. 08/L-032 CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE](#).

137 Two focus groups with journalists and with editors from public, private and NGO media in Kosovo, 12-13.12.2025

— C.10 QUALITY STATISTICS COLLECTION SYSTEMS ESTABLISHED BY STATE AUTHORITIES TO STEM IMPUNITY

Challenges in obtaining reliable and comprehensive statistical data on threats and attacks against journalists persisted in 2025. State authorities in Kosovo still do not maintain a centralised database specifically dedicated to cases involving journalists¹³⁸. Institutions such as the Kosovo Police, the State Prosecutor's Office, and the judiciary collect data within their own systems, but these records remain fragmented and not fully harmonised. As a result, it is difficult to obtain a complete overview of cases involving journalists across the justice system. Efforts to improve data collection have continued through cooperation between the Association of Journalists of Kosovo and judicial institutions to improve transparency and monitoring of cases related to journalist safety.

Some statistical data related to cases involving journalists is collected by state institutions, and it may include information on the number of complaints filed, investigations opened, prosecutions initiated, and court decisions. However, the level of detail remains limited. In general there is no specific classification distinguishing whether these cases involve threats, attacks against, or killings of journalists and other media actors. Consequently, available statistics do not fully reflect the nature and severity of risks faced by journalists or allow for a comprehensive assessment of trends in attacks against media workers.

Previous practices indicate a lack of data disaggregation by key demographic factors, which further limits the capacity for targeted interventions. Court case management systems such as SMIL do not systematically disaggregate statistical data related to cases involving journalists by gender, ethnicity, or other socio-demographic characteristics

— C.11 NON-PHYSICAL THREATS AND HARASSMENTS

During 2025, AJK and SafeJournalists Network registered 25 incidents categorized as "Other threats to journalists," a broad group of non-physical intimidation and harassment that can restrict journalists' ability to work. These cases ranged from political and institutional pressure (for example, threats of lawsuits over election reporting, hostile statements by senior officials, and disciplinary measures affecting public-broadcaster staff) to interference linked to field reporting (including arrests or obstruction while filming) and digital abuse (account hacking/suspension, fabricated videos, and coordinated smear campaigns on social platforms).¹³⁹ Several incidents also reflected gendered harassment, with women journalists targeted by sexist and degrading language.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Interview with Yll Zekaj, Lawyer and Legal Representative of AJK, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 15.01.2026.

¹³⁹ AJK and SJN database.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Gentiana Begolli Pustina, Member of Advisory Panel of Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo, Interviewed by Gëtoarbë Mulliqi, 20.01.2026.

Considering both number and severity, the situation in 2025 appears strained rather than improving. Additionally the number of the reported and registered cases increased by 7 in comparison to 2024. The 25 Non-physical threats and harassments registered account for more than one-third of the 69 total cases recorded by AJK for the year, suggesting that non-physical intimidation remains routine. While some cases show that journalists pursued legal action or filed criminal reports, publicly available entries rarely show prosecutorial steps or final court outcomes, limiting assessment of how many cases are ultimately resolved and whether deterrence is increasing.

Category	Number	Brief description of cases
Non-physical threats and harassment: – Surveillance or monitoring – harassment by phone calls – arbitrary harassment by representatives of judicial or administrative authorities – Aggressive statements by public officials – other forms of pressure that can jeopardize the safety of journalists in the performance of their work. These types of threats do not include mobbing and bullying in the work environment.	25	– Member of Vetëvendosje in the Central Election Commission, Sami Kurteshi, assaults journalists. – Acting Deputy Prime Minister Donika Gërvalla makes offensive remarks toward Leonard Kerquki of T7. – A TeVe1 crew was followed and intimidated by an unknown individual. – Candidate for Mayor of South Mitrovica Faton Peci announced he would sue several journalists. – Acting Prime Minister Albin Kurti called on justice and security institutions to investigate the publication of exit polls by three television stations. – Jetmir Muji, cameraman of Paparaci, was arrested and held at the Qendra Police Station in Prishtina for filming the close protection of President Vjosa Osmani in front of her daughters’ private school. – An Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) official in Deçan shared an ATV journalist’s personal phone number after posting a screenshot of their conversation on Facebook. – Speaker of the Assembly Dimal Basha attacked media outlets and journalists following his election to the position. – RTK management excluded six hosts from moderating news magazines. – Acting Prime Minister Albin Kurti denigrated Klan Kosova health journalist Arbreshë Uka after she asked a question about missing products in the health system. – Mayor of Prishtina Përparim Rama used inappropriate language toward Leonora Kolukaj of Reporteri. – **Vetëvendosje MP Fitore Pacolli attacked Blerta Foniqi Kabashi, editor at RTK, in a Facebook post after she interviewed her. – Nezir Kraki, MP of the GUXO–Vetëvendosje coalition, warned Xhezair Dashi of Nacionale not to ask questions that might “get the journalist into trouble.” – Damjan Portić of Radio Gorazdevac was obstructed by police near Peja while reporting. – A manipulated video misrepresenting a statement by Lirim Mehmetaj circulated on social media targeting the journalist. – Director of Agriculture in the Municipality of Peja Tahir Shala insulted and threatened Valdrin Daci of Peja në Fokus. – Mayor of Prishtina Përparim Rama used sexist labels toward Edona Gashi of Piranjat. – Acting Minister of Agriculture Faton Peci used denigratory language toward Ermal Panduri. – Ilir Pireva, journalist of Klan Kosova, filed a lawsuit against the media outlet citing repeated violations of labor rights. – Journalist Naim Kryeziu and cameraman Fatos Rakovica filed a lawsuit against their former employer Kanal 10 over alleged arbitrary dismissal. – The Energy Regulatory Office invited journalists to a closed, off-the-record consultation without cameras; journalists boycotted the meeting. – Visar Geci, advisor to Mayor Përparim Rama, verbally attacked and used sexist language toward Mediana Statovci of Koha. – Three editors of the first channel of the public broadcaster RTK1 were sanctioned by its director Rilind Gërvalla. – Vehbi Kajtazi’s Facebook account was suspended after mass reporting of his posts related to the February Central Elections. – The Telegram account of Urall Boshnjaku of Mitropol was hacked.

— C.12 THREATS AGAINST THE LIVES AND PHYSICAL SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

Four incidents involving explicit threats to journalists' lives or physical safety were registered in both AJK and SJN databases. They included: a series of online threats targeting Klan Kosova and its staff, followed by police arrest and 48-hour detention of a suspect; serious threats and degrading language aimed at a journalist of VOX Kosova during work on a domestic-violence related story; a public threat of physical violence, including threats of being dragged on the ground, by the leader of a Kosovo national team supporters' group toward a journalist of Kiks Kosova; and a death threat message to journalist Vehbi Kajtazi, after which police arrested a suspect.¹⁴¹

From an effectiveness perspective, 2025 included examples of rapid police action in at least two high risk cases. However, the publicly available case entries provide limited information on prosecutorial follow up, indictments, or final court outcomes, making it difficult to determine how many cases were ultimately resolved. Even with a relatively low count, the presence of death threats across different contexts indicates a continued chilling effect on journalistic work.

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
Death threats and physical harm threats , which may include: – death threats against a journalist, his family and friends or a journalistic source; – threats to cause serious bodily harm to a journalist, his family and friends or a journalistic source. These threats can be: – direct or through third parties; – by means of electronic or face-to-face communication; – implicit and explicit.	4	– Death threats sent via messages to journalists of Klan Kosova; a suspect was arrested and detained for 48 hours. – Journalist of VOX Kosova received threats and abusive language. – Journalist of Kiks Kosova was explicitly threatened with physical violence, including threats that she would be dragged on the ground by the leader of a Kosovo national team supporters' group. – Death threat issued against journalist Vehbi Kajtazi.

— C.13 ACTUAL ATTACKS

In 2025, AJK registered 13 cases of threats and attacks affecting the lives and physical safety of journalists. Of these, four involved direct threats against individual journalists, while nine targeted the reporting team of Klan Kosova during their coverage of election day in different regions of Kosovo. The incidents mainly consisted of verbal intimidation and threats by individuals identified as activists or supporters of Vetëvendosje, who labeled journalists as "traitors," "enemies," and referred to the outlet as "Klan Serbia." These cases illustrate how politically charged contexts, particularly elections, continue to expose journalists to direct threats, harassment, and attempts to obstruct their reporting.

Overall, the situation appears to be worsening. In 2025, AJK recorded a higher number of attacks against journalists compared to 2024, with several incidents involving direct

141 AJK and SJN database.

threats and intimidation during politically sensitive events such as elections. While there have been instances of prompt police response in some high-risk cases, publicly available information provides limited insight into prosecutorial follow-up or final court outcomes.

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
Actual attacks on journalists Types of actual attacks may include actual physical or mental harm, kidnapping, invasion of home/office, seized equipment, arbitrary detention, failed assassination attempts, etc.	13	– Sports journalists attacked and threatened in Prizren – Inflammatory rhetoric towards Adriatik Kelmendi – Close protection of Acting PM Albin Kurti obstructs T7 television journalist – Fikrim Dema of Turkish Democratic Party of Kosovo obstructs Kallxo.com journalist – 9 crew of Klan Kosova were obstructed while covering elections day in Prizren (twice), Ferizaj, Gjakova, Vushtrria, Gjilan, Mitrovica and northern Municipalities, Peja and Istog. Most of the teams consisted of women journalists and their cameramen.

— **C.14 THREATS AND ATTACKS ON MEDIA OUTLETS AND JOURNALISTS’ ASSOCIATIONS**

17 threats and attacks against media institutions and journalists’ associations were recorded in Kosovo, according to AJK’s database. The incidents included verbal attacks and delegitimising statements by political actors, smear campaigns against media outlets, obstruction of journalists during reporting, and cyberattacks against online media. Two cases also involved attacks on media property, including the destruction of TV Syri Vision’s premises in Gjakova and damage to the Veriu.info newsroom in Mitrovica. These cases show that media organisations continue to face political pressure, online harassment, and interference with their work.

The situation shows a slight deterioration in numerical terms, as the number of threats and attacks increased from 14 cases in 2024 to 17 cases in 2025¹⁴². However, the increase should also be considered in the context of 2025 being an election year, when tensions between political actors and media traditionally intensify. Many of the incidents recorded during the year were linked to political rhetoric, campaign activities, and public criticism directed at media outlets. While the number of incidents increased, the severity of cases remained largely similar to previous years, with most incidents involving verbal attacks, smear campaigns, and obstruction of journalists rather than systematic physical violence against media institutions.

142 AJK and SJN database.

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
Threats and attacks on media institutions, organizations, journalists' and media associations. Actual attacks on property of media outlets and organizations, their personnel, seized equipment, aggressive declarations by public officials etc. Also, threats and attacks might include some of the categories listed above.	19	– During protests involving the Urban Traffic public enterprise, media outlets and journalists were prevented from reporting and faced obstruction in carrying out their work. – Candidate for Mayor of Mitrovica, Faton Peci, attacked TV Dukagjini, calling it an "operational center of a criminal enterprise." – A cyberattack targeted the online media outlet Buletini Ekonomik. – VV-Guxo MP and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Donika Gërvalla, attacked journalists and media in two Facebook posts, calling them anything but journalists. – Acting Prime Minister Albin Kurti blamed the media and journalists for Kosovo's drop to 99th place in the Reporters Without Borders Index. – VV MP Salih Zyba used inciting language against Gazeta Express. – VV officials used defamatory language against the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK) and its Chairperson, Xhemajl Rexha, launching a public smear campaign to discredit both the organization and its Chair. – Acting Prime Minister Albin Kurti, during a gathering in Gjilan, attacked the media, referring to them as "some oligarchs' portals." – TV Syri Vision in Gjakova was destroyed after an individual drove a heavy vehicle into its premises. – Two days before the elections, Acting Prime Minister Albin Kurti verbally attacked the media, stating that "the portals are part of the Bermuda Triangle that wants to sink Kosovo." – Sami Kurteshi, a VV member in the Central Election Commission, responded to a question from Besarta Hoti of Nacionale by saying: "You are criminal media, hired killers." – The premises of the online media outlet Veriu.info were demolished in Mitrovica. – Participants and VV officials at an electoral gathering in Malisheva obstructed the Nacionale team. – The Betimi për Drejtësi team filed a criminal complaint against three online pages over continuous attacks and harassment. – Arlind Manxhuka, spokesperson of VV, targeted the media and attacked them by labeling them a "parallel institution," implying that they operated similarly to Serbian parallel structures in Kosovo. – Upon launching its campaign for the parliamentary elections, VV announced a boycott of Klan Kosova, T7, and TV Dukagjini, three of the main television stations in Kosovo.



Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

Kosovo's legal framework provides strong formal guarantees for freedom of expression and media freedom, largely aligned with European standards. The Constitution incorporates international human rights instruments, while specific laws regulate access to public documents, protection of journalistic sources, and the functioning of media institutions. Defamation is decriminalised, and the legal environment, in principle, offers adequate protection for journalists. However, implementation remains inconsistent and often ineffective in practice. Persistent delays in access to public information, weak enforcement of existing laws, and limited institutional accountability continue to undermine these safeguards.

Concerns are also evident regarding the independence and functioning of key regulatory body, the Independent Media Commission, which has faced governance challenges, political pressure, and operational paralysis due to lack of quorum. Similarly, the absence of safeguards against abusive litigation, including SLAPPs, exposes journalists to financial and legal pressures. Overall, while Kosovo has established a solid legal foundation, gaps in enforcement, political influence, and institutional inefficiency significantly limit its effectiveness. Strengthening implementation mechanisms, ensuring independence of institutions, and aligning with emerging European standards particularly in addressing SLAPPs, remain essential for improving the protection of journalists.

JOURNALISTS' POSITION IN THE NEWSROOMS

The position of journalists in Kosovo's newsrooms remains fragile and often marked by labour rights violations and poor working

conditions. Many journalists work under short-term or informal contracts, face delayed salaries, and lack full access to social protections. Despite these challenges, journalists continue to uphold professional standards, although doing so requires constant effort in an increasingly difficult environment. Journalists are regularly challenged from within newsrooms, particularly by management and marketing departments, where commercial interests may influence editorial decisions. At the same time, they face external pressure from political actors, businesses, and other third parties, which further complicates their work and can limit editorial independence.

The absence of a comprehensive journalists' union significantly weakens their position. Without collective protection and representation, journalists are left to navigate these pressures individually, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and interference.

Journalists in Kosovo operate in a sensitive and demanding position, balancing professional integrity against economic insecurity and multiple layers of pressure. Strengthening labour protections and establishing a functional, inclusive union remain essential to improving both working conditions and the resilience of journalism.

JOURNALISTS' SAFETY

Journalists' safety in Kosovo during 2025 remained seriously challenged, in a year marked by four electoral processes and continuous political campaigning. The prolonged election environment intensified political tensions and contributed to a hostile climate for the media, particularly in the absence of strong and consistent institutional responses.

According to the AJK, 2025 recorded one of the highest numbers of attacks against journalists since its establishment, with 69 cases documented. While 2023 remains the peak year with 74 cases, it is important to note that around 30 of those incidents occurred within a few days in the north of Kosovo. In contrast, the cases recorded in 2025 were more evenly distributed and persistent throughout the year, making the situation particularly concerning.

A defining feature of 2025 was the increase in verbal attacks, derogatory language, and delegitimisation of journalists by political actors and influential public figures, including members of the government. This rhetoric not only undermined trust in the media but also contributed to a climate that normalises pressure and hostility toward journalists. Journalists operated in an environment of heightened risk, where political discourse, lack of accountability, and weak institutional protection mechanisms continued to undermine their safety. Strengthening institutional responses and ensuring public condemnation of attacks remain critical priorities.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The state of media freedom and journalists' safety in Kosovo during 2025 reflects a persistent gap between strong legal guarantees and weak implementation in practice. While the country's legal framework broadly aligns with European standards, systemic challenges, particularly political pressure, institutional fragility, and economic vulnerability continue to shape the media environment. The year was marked by continuous electoral cycles and heightened political tensions, which directly affected journalists' safety and working conditions. Increased hostile rhetoric from political actors, combined with weak institutional responses, contributed to an environment where pressure on journalists became more normalised. At the same time, governance crises within key institutions, including regulatory bodies and the public broadcaster, further undermined trust and accountability. Economically, the media sector remains fragile and unsustainable, with no comprehensive public support mechanisms and heavy reliance on limited advertising markets and donor funding. This has a direct impact on newsroom conditions, contributing to precarious employment, self-censorship, and reduced capacity for investigative journalism. Overall, Kosovo's media landscape remains pluralistic but vulnerable. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening institutional independence, improving enforcement of existing laws, ensuring sustainable financing, and enhancing protection mechanisms for journalists. Without such reforms, the gap between formal standards and everyday realities is likely to persist.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

What should be done:

- Adopt a new Law on the Independent Media Commission (IMC) fully aligned with EU and Council of Europe standards, ensuring independence in appointment and dismissal procedures.
- Ensure functional governance of RTK, including timely appointment of Board members and a sustainable, independent funding model.
- Introduce anti-SLAPP provisions in line with the EU Directive and establish safeguards against abusive litigation.
- Strengthen implementation of the Law on Access to Public Documents, including sanctions for delays and non-compliance by institutions.
- Establish clear legal rules for state advertising and public funding transparency.

- Improve coordination between institutions (KJC, KPC, Police, AIP) and ensure systematic data collection on cases involving journalists.

What journalists' organizations (esp. AJK) should do:

- Continue legal advocacy for IMC reform and anti-SLAPP legislation.
- Strengthen and maintain a comprehensive, disaggregated database of attacks and legal cases.
- Facilitate regular dialogue with judiciary and regulators.
- Provide targeted training for judges and prosecutors on freedom of expression standards.

B. JOURNALISTS' POSITION IN THE NEWSROOMS

What should be done:

- Ensure strict enforcement of labour legislation in the media sector, including contracts, salaries, and social protections.
- Support the establishment of a functional, inclusive journalists' union.
- Introduce minimum standards for employment contracts and working conditions across media.
- Reduce undue influence of management and marketing structures on editorial content.
- Promote gender-sensitive and inclusive newsroom policies.

What journalists' associations should do:

- Lead advocacy for sector-specific labour protections.
- Facilitate the creation of a journalists' union through inclusive consultations.
- Provide legal aid and training on labour rights.
- Expand mental health support programmes for journalists.
- Strengthen cooperation with media outlets to protect editorial independence.

C. JOURNALISTS' SAFETY

What should be done:

- Establish a functional national mechanism for protection of journalists, including rapid response protocols.
- Ensure consistent and public condemnation of attacks by state institutions, especially during election periods.

- Strengthen the role and capacity of designated police officers and prosecutors handling media cases.
- Develop specific responses to political pressure and hostile rhetoric, including accountability measures for public officials.
- Improve data collection and transparency on attacks, threats, and SLAPP cases.

What journalists' organizations (AJK) should do:

- Continue systematic monitoring and reporting of attacks, especially during elections.
- Advocate for institutional accountability for political pressure and verbal attacks.
- Provide legal protection and emergency support mechanisms for journalists at risk.
- Strengthen partnerships with civil society and international actors on safety mechanisms.
- Promote awareness campaigns on journalists' safety and role in democracy.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR AJK

- Focus on four pillars:
 - Institutional independence and legal reform
 - Labour rights and newsroom conditions
 - Journalists' safety in politically polarised environments
 - Accountability for political pressure and public discourse
- Lead coordinated advocacy with state institutions and international partners.
- Strengthen monitoring, legal support, and rapid response capacities.

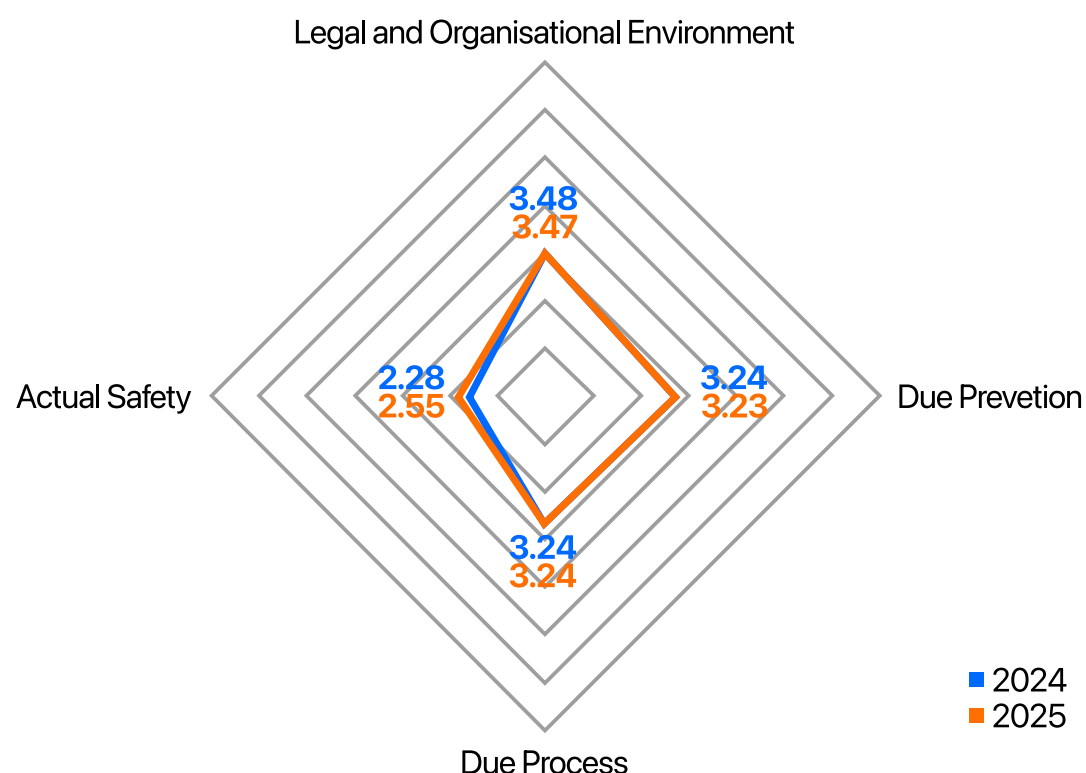
IV

Journalists' Safety Index Kosovo – 2025

This section of the report graphically presents the Journalists' Safety Index in 2025, compared to the previous year 2024. For each of the four dimensions and for all 19 indicators, a brief explanation of the key changes that occurred in 2025 is presented.

A broader explanation of the data and the changes that occurred for each individual indicator of the Index can be read in the narrative section of the report:

Indicator in the Journalists' Safety Index	Narrative report
I. Legal and organizational environment	
Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not have and intimidating effect on journalists and the media	A.6
The confidentiality of journalistic sources is guaranteed by law and respected by the authorities	A.8
Other laws are applied objectively and allow journalists and other media professionals to work freely and safely	A.7
Journalists are free to practice their profession and to establish, join and participate in the work of journalists' associations	A.9
Journalists' work positions are stable and they are protected at the workplace	B.1
II. Prevention	
Journalists and other media professionals have access to immediate and effective safeguards when threatened	C.1
Journalists and other media professionals (whose lives or physical integrity are at real and immediate risk) have access to specific protection/safety mechanisms	C.2
Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms when faced with gender-based threats, harassment and violence	C.3
The practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks against journalists and the media has been established	C.4
Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' safety issues	C.5
III. Process	
Specialised investigative units and/or officers are equipped with the relevant knowledge to investigate attacks and violence against journalists	C.6
Investigations into serious physical attacks on journalists and other media professionals are carried out effectively	C.7
Journalists and other media professionals are effectively protected from various forms of online harassment	C.8
Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media professionals are conducted transparently	C.9
Government authorities have established a sound system for the collection of statistical data to prevent impunity	C.10
IV. Actual Safety	
Non-physical threats and harassment	C.11
Death threats and threats to physical safety of journalists	C.12
Real attacks	C.13
Threats and attacks on media institutions, organizations, media and journalists' associations	C.14



	2024	2025	Major new changes in each dimension
I. Legal and organizational environment	3.48	3.47	↓ Kosovo's media freedom environment slightly deteriorated due to legal uncertainty around the IMC and increased public pressure during the election year. The Constitutional Court annulled the amended IMC law, confirming concerns about regulatory independence and possible state oversight of online media. While the legal framework remains generally aligned with European standards, weak implementation, lengthy procedures, and financial burdens continue to discourage journalists from seeking legal protection.
II. Prevention	3.24	3.23	↓ Preventive mechanisms remained insufficient in 2025. Although AJK continued cooperation with police, prosecution, courts, and international partners, no formal protocol or hotline mechanism was established for rapid responses to threats. Prevention still depends largely on ad hoc communication, individual institutional commitment, and AJK's direct intervention, rather than a stable and institutionalised system.
III. Process	3.24	3.24	– Due process showed limited progress, while delays and inconsistencies persisted. Journalists continued to face lengthy proceedings in cases of threats, attacks, labour violations, and online harassment. Although some institutions responded to AJK's requests, investigations and court procedures remained slow, weakening trust in protection mechanisms and limiting accountability for violations against journalists.
IV. Actual Safety	2.28	2.55	↑ Journalists' actual safety remained fragile in 2025. They continued to face physical threats, verbal attacks, online harassment, gender-based abuse, smear campaigns, and pressure linked to political developments. Women journalists were particularly exposed to misogynistic attacks and gendered disinformation. Limited institutional response shows that safety risks remain physical, digital, legal, economic, and psychological.
Journalist Safety Index	2.80	2.93	↑



Legal and organisational environment

Legal provisions related to defamation and their implementation do not produce chilling effects on journalists and media



Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities



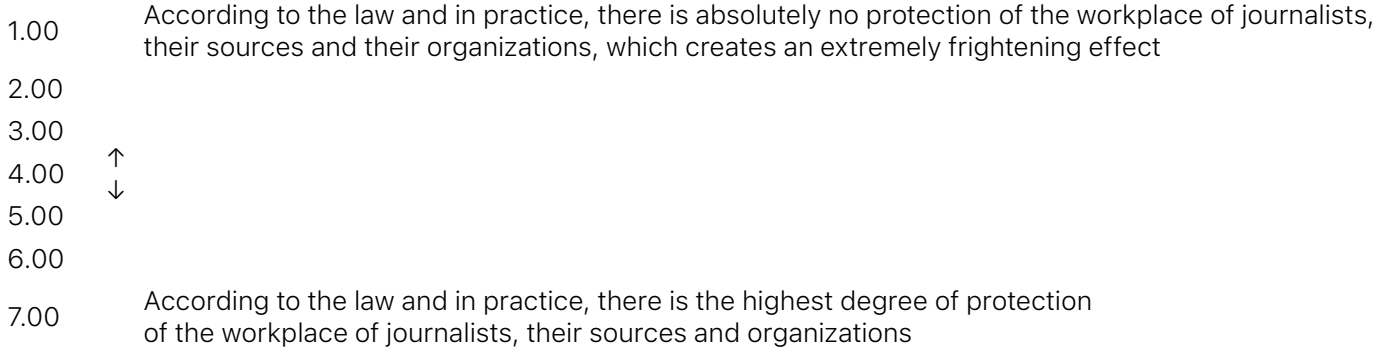
Other laws are implemented objectively and allow the journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely



Journalists are free to pursuit their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations



Journalists' job position is stable and protected at the workplace



INDICATOR 1.1

— LEGAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO DEFAMATION AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION DO NOT PRODUCE CHILLING EFFECTS ON JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA

Score for 2024: 3.40 / Score for 2025: 3.38

The situation has slightly deteriorated in 2025. This minor decline reflects the continued use or threat of defamation lawsuits, combined with stronger public rhetoric by political actors during an election-driven year, which contributed to indirect pressure on journalists and media outlets. Although defamation remains regulated within a framework generally aligned with European standards, the practical burden of defending such cases remains significant. Lengthy court procedures, legal costs, and reputational pressure continue to discourage investigative reporting, particularly on corruption, misuse of public funds, and politically sensitive topics.

INDICATOR 1.2

— CONFIDENTIALITY OF JOURNALISTS' SOURCES IS GUARANTEED IN THE LEGISLATION AND RESPECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES

Score for 2024: 4.18 / Score for 2025: 4.18

The situation has remained stable in 2025. This stability reflects the continued presence and respect of strong legal protections for the confidentiality of journalistic sources, with no reported cases of authorities forcing journalists to disclose their sources during the reporting period. These safeguards remain particularly important for investigative journalists working on corruption, organised crime, institutional accountability, and other sensitive public-interest issues. The unchanged score shows that, despite broader pressures on the media environment, source protection continues to be one of the more solid guarantees in Kosovo's legal framework.

INDICATOR 1.3

— OTHER LAWS ARE IMPLEMENTED OBJECTIVELY AND ALLOW THE JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS TO WORK FREELY AND SAFELY

Score for 2024: 2.88 / Score for 2025: 2.88

The situation has remained largely unchanged in 2025. However, the lower score reflects continued concern that the legal environment does not sufficiently protect journalists from abusive legal actions, especially in the absence of specific anti-SLAPP legislation. While no systematic arbitrary application of laws was reported, repeated lawsuits and legal threats against journalists continue to create financial, professional, and psychological pressure. This is particularly visible in reporting on corruption, public officials, political influence, and powerful private interests, where legal action can be used to intimidate or exhaust media actors.

INDICATOR 1.4

— **JOURNALISTS ARE FREE TO PURSUE THEIR PROFESSION AND ESTABLISH, JOIN AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR ASSOCIATIONS.**

Score for 2024: 3.90 / Score for 2025: 3.90

The situation has remained stable in 2025. The slight improvement reflects the continued absence of legal or administrative restrictions preventing journalists from exercising their profession or from establishing, joining, and participating in professional associations. AJK and other media-related organisations continued to operate freely, represent journalists, react publicly to violations, and engage with institutions and international partners. However, this formal freedom remains affected by broader structural challenges, including political pressure, weak labour protections, economic insecurity, and uneven access to professional support, especially for journalists outside major media centres.

INDICATOR 1.5

— **JOURNALISTS' JOB POSITION IS STABLE AND PROTECTED IN THE WORKPLACE**

Score for 2024: 3.04 / Score for 2025: 3.02

The situation has slightly deteriorated in 2025. This small decline reflects the persistence of precarious employment conditions, especially in smaller private media outlets, where journalists often work under informal arrangements, short-term contracts, delayed payments, or weak internal protection mechanisms. The lack of a strong sector-wide journalists' union continues to limit collective bargaining and leaves many journalists dependent on individual negotiations with employers. Labour rights violations, fear of dismissal, and limited access to legal remedies remain important concerns, particularly for younger journalists, women journalists, and media workers in less secure positions.



Due Prevention



INDICATOR 2.1

— JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ACTORS HAVE ACCESS TO IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES WHEN THEY ARE THREATENED

Score for 2024: 3.41 / Score for 2025: 3.41

The situation remained largely unchanged in 2025. This reflects the continued absence of a dedicated and institutionalised protection mechanism for journalists, despite the high number of threats, attacks, and intimidation cases reported during the year. While journalists can report cases to the police and some institutional responses are provided, these measures are not systematic, rapid, or specifically tailored to the needs of media workers. Protection still depends largely on the seriousness of each individual case, the responsiveness of specific officials, and AJK's intervention in documenting, reacting to, and following up on reported threats.

INDICATOR 2.2

— JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS (WHOSE LIVES OR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY ARE AT A REAL AND IMMEDIATE RISK) HAVE ACCESS TO SPECIAL PROTECTION/SAFETY MECHANISMS

Score for 2024: 3.34 / Score for 2025: 3.34

The situation remained unchanged in 2025. Kosovo still relies mainly on general police protection measures, without a specialised safety system designed for journalists and media workers facing serious or immediate risks. Although urgent cases may receive police attention, there is no structured mechanism that ensures risk assessment, rapid response, follow-up, and coordination between police, prosecution, courts, and media organisations. As a result, protection remains reactive and case-by-case, rather than preventive, standardised, and based on the specific risks journalists face when reporting on sensitive issues, protests, political tensions, or organised crime.

INDICATOR 2.3

— FEMALE JOURNALISTS HAVE ACCESS TO LEGAL MEASURES AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS WHEN FACED WITH GENDER-BASED THREATS, HARASSMENT, AND VIOLENCE

Score for 2024: 3.24 / Score for 2025: 3.22

The situation has slightly deteriorated in 2025. This small decline reflects the persistence of gender-based threats, online harassment, misogynistic language, and coordinated smear campaigns targeting women journalists, particularly those reporting on politics, corruption, gender equality, and human rights. Although legal protections and reporting channels formally exist, implementation remains inconsistent, and many women journalists still hesitate to report cases due to low trust in institutions, fear of further exposure, or previous experiences of inadequate

follow-up. Support mechanisms remain fragmented and insufficiently sensitive to the specific digital, psychological, and professional impact of gender-based attacks.

INDICATOR 2.4

— THE PRACTICE OF REGULAR PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF THREATS AND ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED

Score for 2024: 2.63 / Score for 2025: 2.54

The situation has significantly deteriorated in 2025. This decline is linked to increased hostile rhetoric against journalists and media outlets, particularly during the election period and in politically sensitive debates, combined with the lack of consistent and clear condemnation by public officials. In several cases, attacks or pressure against journalists were either ignored, minimised, or accompanied by language that further questioned the credibility of the media. Such discourse contributes to normalising intimidation, weakens public trust in journalism, and creates an environment where threats, verbal attacks, and smear campaigns are less likely to be treated as serious violations.

INDICATOR 2.5

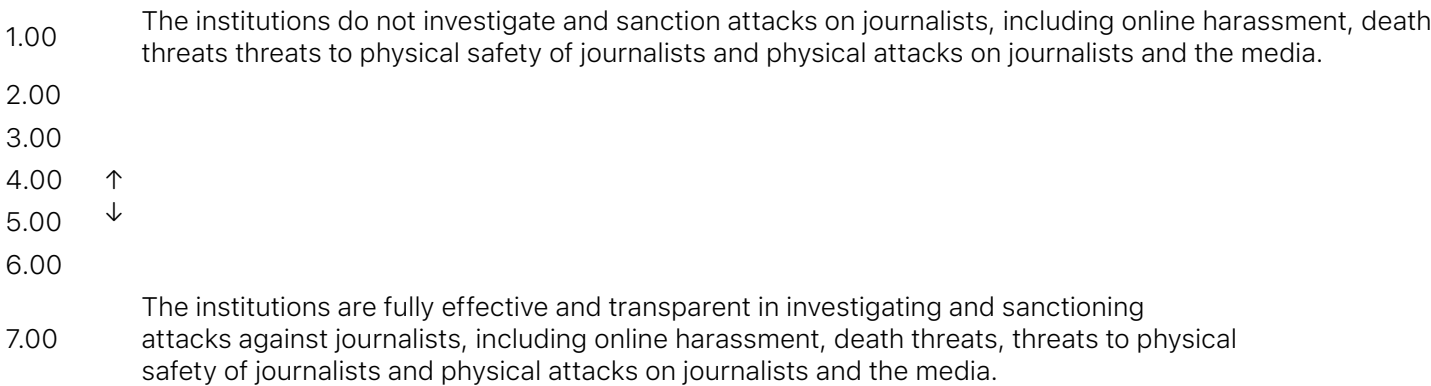
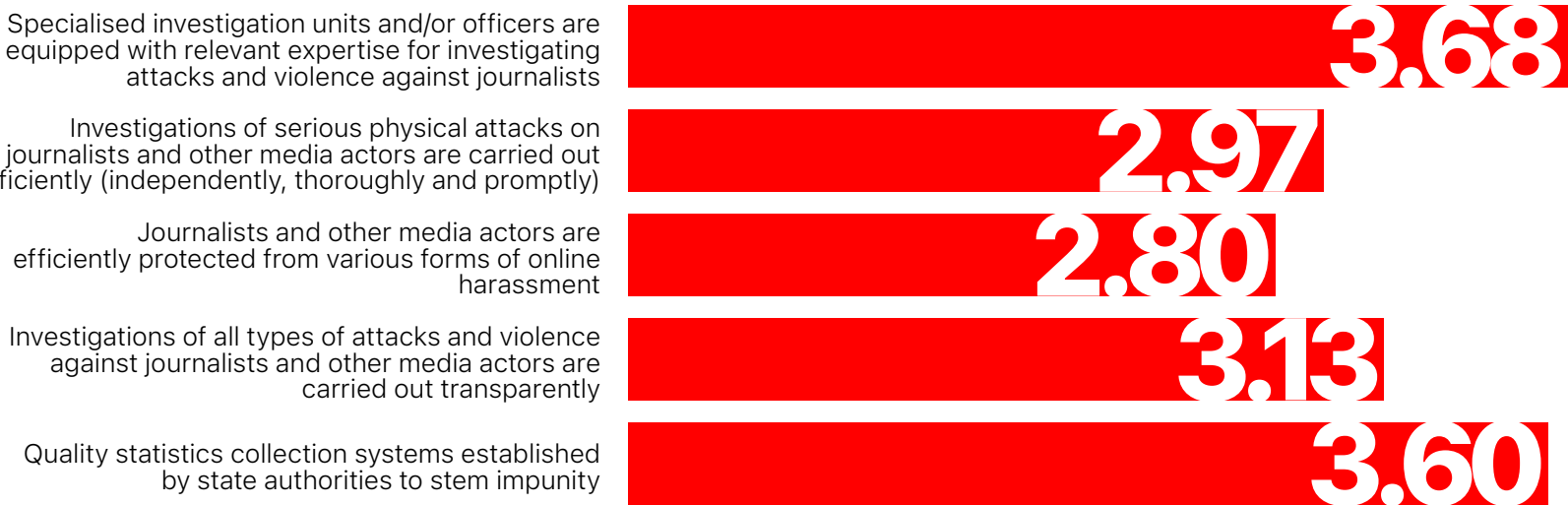
— POLICE AUTHORITIES ARE SENSITIVE TO JOURNALISTS' PROTECTION ISSUE

Score for 2024: 3.60 / Score for 2025: 3.64

The situation has slightly improved in 2025. This improvement reflects increased cooperation between Kosovo Police, AJK, OSCE and other international partners, including more regular communication, training initiatives, and discussions on the safety of journalists during protests, public events, and tense reporting environments. Police responsiveness in some reported cases improved, and there is greater awareness of the need to treat attacks on journalists as a professional safety issue, not only as ordinary incidents. However, the absence of formal protocols, clear communication channels, and specialised procedures means responses still depend on individual officers and are not yet fully consistent across all regions.



Due process



INDICATOR 3.1

— SPECIALISED INVESTIGATION UNITS AND/OR OFFICERS ARE EQUIPPED WITH RELEVANT EXPERTISE FOR INVESTIGATING ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Score for 2024: 3.66 / Score for 2025: 3.68

The situation has slightly improved in 2025. This small improvement reflects better coordination between AJK and relevant institutions, as well as the continued use of designated contact points within police and prosecutorial structures for cases involving journalists. These channels have helped improve communication, reporting, and follow-up in some cases, particularly when AJK intervenes directly. However, Kosovo still lacks specialised investigation units, mandatory protocols, and systematic training for handling attacks against journalists, which limits the effectiveness, consistency, and sensitivity of institutional responses.

INDICATOR 3.2

— INVESTIGATIONS OF SERIOUS PHYSICAL ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CARRIED OUT EFFICIENTLY (INDEPENDENTLY, THOROUGHLY AND PROMPTLY)

Score for 2024: 2.97 / Score for 2025: 2.97

The situation has remained largely unchanged in 2025. Although the score increased, investigations into serious physical attacks continue to face delays, procedural inefficiencies, and limited attention to the wider context in which attacks occur. Cases are often treated as ordinary incidents rather than attacks linked to journalists' professional duties, which can weaken accountability and deterrence. While investigations are generally initiated, they are not always conducted promptly, thoroughly, or with sufficient transparency, especially when attacks take place during protests, political tensions, or reporting on sensitive issues.

INDICATOR 3.3

— JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE EFFICIENTLY PROTECTED FROM VARIOUS FORMS OF ONLINE HARASSMENT

Score for 2024: 2.83 / Score for 2025: 2.80

The situation has slightly deteriorated in 2025. This decline reflects the growing intensity of online abuse against journalists, including coordinated harassment, smear campaigns, threats, misogynistic language, and attempts to discredit professional reporting. Women journalists and journalists covering politics, corruption, gender equality, and public accountability remain particularly exposed to these attacks. Existing legal and institutional responses are still not sufficiently adapted to digital threats, while slow reporting procedures, weak follow-up, and difficulties identifying perpetrators continue to leave journalists without effective protection.

INDICATOR 3.4

— INVESTIGATIONS OF ALL TYPES OF ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CARRIED OUT TRANSPARENTLY

Score for 2024: 3.13 / Score for 2025: 3.13

The situation has remained unchanged in 2025. Formal mechanisms for communication and information-sharing exist, but in practice they are applied inconsistently and often depend on individual institutions or officials. Journalists and AJK do not always receive timely, proactive, or detailed updates on the progress of investigations, indictments, or court proceedings. This lack of a set procedure for case follow-up makes it difficult to assess institutional performance, follow case outcomes, and identify patterns of impunity, especially in cases involving threats, online harassment, physical attacks, and pressure against media workers.

INDICATOR 3.5

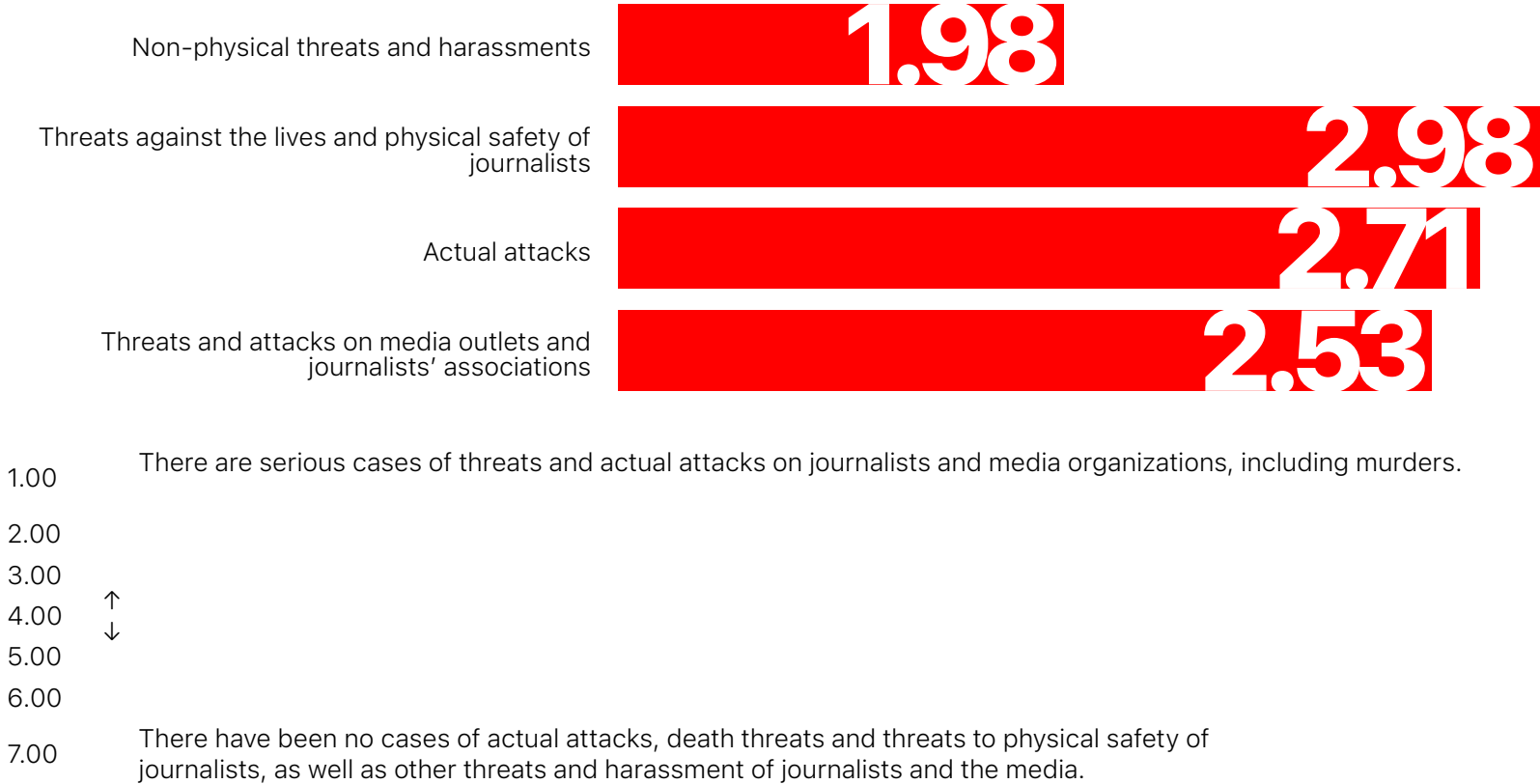
— QUALITY STATISTICS COLLECTION SYSTEMS ESTABLISHED BY STATE AUTHORITIES TO STEM IMPUNITY

Score for 2024: 3.60 / Score for 2025: 3.60

The situation has remained unchanged in 2025. State authorities continue to collect some data on cases involving journalists, but the system remains fragmented across police, prosecution, courts, and other relevant institutions. The lack of harmonised databases and consistently disaggregated data by type of attack, gender, profession, outcome, and institutional response limits the ability to measure impunity accurately. As a result, policy responses remain less evidence-based, while AJK's independent monitoring continues to play an essential role in documenting violations and identifying gaps in institutional follow-up.

IV.

Actual Safety



INDICATOR 4.1

— THREATS AND HARASSMENT THAT ARE NOT RELATED TO PHYSICAL SAFETY

This may include surveillance or tracking; harassment by telephone; arbitrary judicial or administrative harassment; aggressive statements by public officials; other types of pressures that threaten the safety of journalists while performing their work. These types of threats do not include mobbing and bullying in the working environment.

Score for 2024: 1.78 / Score for 2025: 1.98

In 2025 a total of 25 non-physical threats against journalists were registered, including political pressure, online harassment, smear campaigns, aggressive public statements, and attempts to discredit media work. These forms of intimidation have become more frequent and systematic, especially during politically sensitive periods and election-related reporting. Although they do not always involve direct physical danger, they seriously affect journalists' professional security, mental well-being, and ability to report freely, contributing to a persistent climate of fear, self-censorship, and pressure.

INDICATOR 4.2

— THREATS AGAINST THE LIVES AND PHYSICAL SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

This may include calling for the killing of journalists, their friends, family, or sources; calling for physical attacks on journalists, their friends, family, or sources. Threats can be direct or sent via third parties; sent electronically or in direct communication; they can be implicit as well as explicit.

Score for 2024: 2.17 / Score for 2025: 2.98

A total of 4 incidents were registered, or 5 less than the previous year. Although the number of cases remained comparatively low, the reported incidents involved serious threats, including death threats and threats of physical violence against journalists because of their professional work. Even isolated cases of this nature have a strong chilling effect, as they create fear not only for the targeted journalists but also for their colleagues, families, and sources. The continued presence of such threats shows that journalists remain exposed when reporting on sensitive political, social, or criminal matters, even when the overall number of cases is limited.

INDICATOR 4.3

— ACTUAL ATTACKS

This can include actual physical or mental harm, kidnapping, invasion of home/office, seizing of equipment, arbitrary detention, failed murder attempts, etc.

Score for 2024: 2.64 / Score for 2025: 2.71

A total of 13 incidents happened in 2025, which is still much lower comparing to 2023 when there was the largest number of attacks registered (20) in the last 6 years. Reported incidents included intimidation, interference with reporting, obstruction of movement or filming, and other actions that directly affected journalists' ability to work safely. Political dynamics played a key role in exposing journalists to greater risks, especially when media workers reported from polarised environments or questioned political actors, institutions, and interest groups.

INDICATOR 4.4

— THREATS AND ATTACKS ON MEDIA OUTLETS AND JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATIONS

Threats can include harassing phone calls, arbitrary judicial or administrative harassment, aggressive declarations by public officials, and other forms of pressure (inscriptions, threatening posts, etc.). Actual attacks include invasion of offices, seizure of equipment, breaking the equipment, vehicles, etc.

Score for 2024: 2.52 / Score for 2025: 2.53

The situation remained almost similar in 2025. This slight change reflects the continued pressure against media outlets and journalists' associations, including cyberattacks, physical damage, hostile public rhetoric, and political targeting of media institutions. Pressure is increasingly directed not only at individual journalists, but also at newsrooms, media platforms, and representative organisations that defend journalists' rights. Such attacks undermine institutional resilience, weaken public trust in independent media, and create additional operational and financial burdens for outlets already facing economic instability and political pressure.

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