KOSOVA
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTE

POLITICAL INTEGRITY DATA SCOPING IN KOSOVO

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The Kosova Democratic Institute is a branch of
Transparency International for Kosovo

KDI's mission is to support the
development of participatory
democracy and the fight against
corruption by promoting transparency,
accountability and integrity at all levels
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Political Integrity Data Scoping in Kosovo
IPA-2022-440-922 | Integrity Watch in the Western Balkans and Turkey

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INTRODUCTION

Corruption and political integrity have long been enduring challenges in Kosovo, with detrimental impacts on various sectors such as politics, public administration, judiciary, and law enforcement. Corruption in political financing in Kosovo attributes opaque political financing, undue political influence, non-transparent handling, and potential misuse of funds within the context of political campaigns, parties, and allocation of public resources. This involves practices such as undisclosed or hidden contributions, favour-seeking donations, favour based appointments in high-level institutional positions, potential money laundering, and the distortion of the democratic process through undue influence from special interests or wealthy individuals, all of which can undermine the fairness, integrity, and accountability of the political system.

Although associated with some progress in fight against corruption, the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2022 places Kosovo 84th on the list of 180 countries with a score of 41 points (highly corrupt) out of 100 points (least corrupt) countries.

In recent years, Kosovo has taken steps to combat corruption and improve political integrity by establishing several institutions and mechanisms. These initiatives have shown some progress, as evidenced by improved scores in the Corruption Perception Index. Legislation has been enacted to enhance political integrity and promote transparency, such as the Law on Access to Public Documents and the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers. The former grants individuals the right to access information held by public institutions, aiming to foster transparency and hold public officials accountable. However, challenges remain in terms of effective implementation and raising awareness about citizens' rights to access information.

Kosovo has also established institutions like the Anti-Corruption Agency and the Special Prosecution Office to investigate and prosecute corruption cases. Efforts have been made to enhance integrity and transparency through asset declaration systems for public officials. Furthermore, the government launched the Kosovo Open Data Portal in 2018, providing limited access to datasets from public institutions. While this initiative aims to increase transparency and facilitate data-driven decision-making, there is a need to establish mechanisms for data collection, verification, and reuse. Institutions responsible for publishing data on the portal should ensure accuracy, quality, and reliability. Collaboration between institutions, civil society organizations, and stakeholders can contribute to improving data quality and usefulness.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Implementation gaps, lack of capacity, and political interference can undermine the effectiveness of the legal framework and open data initiatives. Continuous efforts are required to strengthen institutions, ensure the independence of oversight bodies, and raise awareness about political integrity and transparency. Questions have been raised regarding the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures, and concerns remain about political interference in the judiciary and government decision-making processes.

In conclusion, while Kosovo has made strides in addressing corruption and enhancing political integrity, there is still work to be done. Strengthening institutions, promoting transparency, and ensuring the effective implementation of anti-corruption measures are crucial for fostering good governance and restoring public trust. Continued efforts to improve data management practices and data openness can also contribute to combatting corruption and facilitating evidence-based decision-making. One of such efforts is also the Government's political will to restart negotiations and efforts for Kosovo's membership in OGP, hence also focusing on digitalisation of services, enhancing transparency and promoting public participation into public processes and policy making.

LIST OF DATASETS ASSESSED

Open data plays a crucial role in combating corruption as it facilitates transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Public access to directories of public officials enables scrutiny of their actions, serving as a deterrent to corrupt practices. Below is an overview showcasing the significance of transparency within certain policies aimed at combating political corruption:

- The availability of **asset and interest declarations** to the public helps uncover conflicts of interest and illicit enrichment.

- Open data on **political financing** safeguards against undue influence and fosters fair elections.

- **Government budget** and **government spending** data allow for monitoring and reduce the risk of embezzlement.

- The publication of **public procurement** information ensures fair competition and efficient use of funds.

- Open **voting records** hold officials accountable; help identify tailored made laws and contribute to building trust, and

- **Business registers** expose financial crimes and help in identifying risks associated with political financing and allocation of public resource.

In summary, the availability of open data pertaining to public officials, assets, political financing, government budget, spending, public procurement, voting records, and company registers is indispensable in the fight against corruption. While Kosovo has established a solid legal framework promoting transparency to its citizens, unfortunately, the availability of open data remains limited.

INDICATIVE LIST OF DATA SOURCES

D1 – Directories of public officials: containing a list of all public officials above a certain level of seniority, along with details of their role.

D2 – Asset and interests of public officials: containing the key assets and interests of public officials above a certain level of seniority (and in some cases their families)

D3 – Political financing: containing data on the financial contributions received by a politician, a political party, their committees and third parties during a period of time.

D4 – Government budget: including national government budget at a high level (e.g. spending by sector, department, sub-department, etc.).

D5 – Government spending: records of actual (past) national government spending at a detailed transactional level: at the level of monthly government expenditure on specific items (usually this means individual records of spending amounts under $1 million, or even under $100,000).

D6 – Public procurement: details of the contracts issued by the national or federal government, including contract award data and not just requests for bids

D7 –Voting records: containing registers on individual voters in the national legislature (including session, chamber and law category – amendment, new bill, nomination, etc.).

D8- Company registers: containing a list of every company legally registered to operate within a jurisdiction. They should include information on when companies were formed and whether they are still active, as well as including details of company directors.

ASSESSMENT OF THE DATA CHARACTERISTICS

Each of the indicators measured in the eight areas of public policies was assessed with a simple YES/NO answer. A final score will result from the aggregated values for each of the questions.

- Each 'Y' value is equal to 1.

- Each 'N' value is equal to 0.

An exception to the above is the question D-Formats, the measurement of which is elabo-rated below under the description of the indicator (Bullet point 6).

1. **D-Exist** Does this information exist in any form, even if not publicly accessible? YES/NO/NO EVIDENCE (Please describe the evidence and if applicable include links that may point to the existence of the data.) If the answer to this question is 'NO' for any of the datasets evaluated then you don't need to continue with the rest of the 'D-' questions for that dataset, given that they won't be applicable.

2. **D-Data** Is this data available online in any form? YES/NO (Include links to the availa-ble data as evidence.) If the answer to this question is 'NO' for any of the datasets evaluated then you don't need to continue with the rest of the 'D-' questions for that dataset, given that they won't be applicable.

3. **D-Timeliness** Are the available datasets timely and updated? YES/NO (Include last update date and update frequency as evidence.)

4. **D-Completeness** Does the dataset include all units/items/subjects that are required to be reported? (For example, in the case of assets and interests of officials, does the dataset include all the relevant officials, or are there missing ones.) YES/NO (If no, describe the extent of the missingness and provide any key examples. Very of-ten this will be impossible to assess without in-depth research, so this question will be treated as a pilot).

5. **D-Granularity** Does the government release datasets at the finest level of granular-ity available without data aggregations? YES/NO (Describe any existing aggregation as evidence.) For example government spending can be reported at its most granu-lar at the level of each invoice paid or aggregated by spending category or institu-tion.

6. **D-Formats** Does the government release datasets in machine-readable and reusa-ble formats? YES/NO If YES, is it through: a) a machine readable file or b)APIs. If NO, is it a) image/hand-written text or b) digital text? (Include the list of all available for-mats as evidence.) Some examples of machine-readable and reusable formats are: csv, xls, xlsx, ods, xml, shp, px and json. **The scoring for this question is as follows: YES(a) = 1; YES(b) = 1.5; NO(a) = 0; NO(b) = 0.5.**

7. **D-Openness** Does the government release open data that is free of charge and un-der an open and unrestricted licence? YES/NO (Include references to any applicable charging policy and licence as evidence.) An open licence must clearly state that an-yone has permission to reuse it and does not restrict what the data can be reused for, more than attribution and share-alike. Refer to the Open Definition and the list of conformant licences for a detailed overview of what counts as an open licence.

8. **D-Accessibility** Does the government release the datasets without mandatory regis-tration? YES/NO (Include links to any required registration process as evidence.)

9. **D-Interoperability** Does the government make use of common identifiers when collecting and publishing data? YES/NO (Include references to any implemented standard as evidence. If Yes, please provide information on whether these common identifiers are shared with other key datasets.)

10. **D-Metadata** Does the government ensure that the datasets include consistent core metadata including at least a descriptive title, data source, publication date and available formats? YES/NO (Include links to any existing metadata descriptions as ev-idence.)

11. **D-Documentation** Does the government provide clear accompanying documenta-tion for the published datasets with sufficient information to understand the source(s) and analytical limitations of the data? YES/NO (Include links to any accom-panying documentation as evidence.)

12. **D-Extent** Is the dataset available at the national level? YES/NO. (If NO, please include in notes the geographic area covered).

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

To address the issue of political financing corruption in Kosovo, KDI has chosen to evaluate eight sets of data or sources, each based on 12 indicators. These selections aim to aid in identifying corruption risks linked to this aspect of public engagement. These assessments have been instrumental in pinpointing both favourable aspects and shortcomings related to transparency and data availability across different public institutions. The evaluations also expose a noteworthy contrast in the degree of openness observed among the exam-ined datasets in Kosovo. While specific datasets are easily obtainable, others necessitate requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Additionally, some possess distinct data sources, while others lack da-tasets or data sources entirely.

The evaluation highlights public procurement data openness as a notable illustration of transparent data practices. This is demonstrated through the provision of timely and cost-free information about its opera-tions, along with its adherence to an Open Government Partnership (OGP) format.

While there are publicly and free of cost web-based data on asset declarations and business registries, both the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Kosovo Agency for Prevention of Corruption do not publish their respective datasets.

Back in 2018, the Ministry of Finance launched the Transparency Portal focusing on government budget and expenditures. Regrettably, this platform has remained stagnant since 2021, rendering it unusable as a cur-rent resource. The evaluation reveals the existence of publicly accessible and cost-free data sources concern-ing the public budget (in the form of legal documents including tables) and government expenditures (finan-cial reports). However, these data sources are exclusively available in PDF format.

Lately, the Central Election Commission has initiated the publication of financial reports from political parties on its website. However, these data sources are presented in the form of scanned images, rendering them quite challenging to reuse or an-alyse effectively.

Nevertheless, the two public activities exhibiting the least satisfactory performance are those associated with the registry of public officials and the voting records indicator. The most recent publication of the public offi-cials' registry dates back to 2018. Moreover, since 2019, the electronic voting equipment within the parlia-ment has been inoperative, leading to an absence of records concerning individual deputies' reports during this interval.

The following is an evaluation of each assessed data set and/or source, based on 12 indicators.

Dataset	1. Exist	2. Data	3. Timeliness	4. Completeness	5. Granularity	6. Formats
Asset and interests of public officials	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N(b)
Company registers	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N(b)
Directories of public officials	Y	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Government budget	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N(b)
Government spending	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N(b)
Public procurement	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y(b)
Political financing	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N(b)
Voting records	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

7. Openness	8. Accessibility	9. Interoperability	10. Metadata	11. Document.	12. Extent	Total score
Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	8.5
Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	8.5
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	7.5
Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	8.5
Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	10.5
Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	8
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this data scoping, the following are some of the recommendations for action by applicable institutions, which besides promoting transparency and public trust, are crucial in the fight against corruption and promotion of public and political integrity:

1. Improve Access to Information on Assets and Company Registers: To enhance transparency, The Anti-Corruption Agency should make the datasets of asset declarations of public officials and the register of public officials openly accessible to the public.

2. Improve Access to Company Registers: While the information on registered companies is publicly available in a web format, the Ministry of Trade and Industry should also provide open access to its datasets, which would eliminate bureaucratic barriers and time delays in extracting this already public infor-mation.

3. Update and Maintain Transparency Platforms: Ministry of Finance should ensure that transparency platforms, such as the Transparency Portal is regularly updated and maintained, and instead of aggregated data on expenditures, it provides open access to datasets on the budget and expenditure reports.

4. Improve Availability of Political Party Reports: Central Elections Commission shall engage in creating the digital infrastruc-ture for political finance reporting. Such infrastructure will not only contribute to accura-cy and efficiency of reporting, but will facilitate analysis, comparison, and understanding of the financial aspects of political parties.

5. Restore Functionality of Electronic Voting Equipment: Assembly of Kosovo needs to take necessary steps to repair or replace the non-functional electronic voting equipment in the parliament. Ensuring accurate voting records is crucial for maintaining transparency and accountability in the legislative process.

6. Harmonization datasets: The Office of the Prime Minister needs to engage in providing guidance, establish data standards including interoperability amongst them, and support institutions in improving their data management practices.

ENDNOTES

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