



SECOND MONITORING REPORT

KOSOVO IN THE BERLIN PROCESS:

To what extent have the commitments for the Common Regional Market and the Green Agenda been fulfilled?

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KOSOVO IN THE BERLIN PROCESS: To what extent have the commitments for the Common Regional Market and the Green Agenda been fulfilled?

INTRODUCTION

On August 28, 2024, it was 10 years since the Berlin Summit, where the so-called Berlin Process was first launched. This diplomatic initiative of the then German Chancellor Angela Merkel aimed at resolving outstanding internal issues between the Western Balkan countries, achieving reconciliation within and between societies in the region, enhancing regional economic cooperation and laying the foundations for sustainable growth.¹

In addition to the Western Balkan countries, the Berlin process involves EU institutions, international financial bodies, civil society organizations, youth, and regional businesses.² Since 2014, yearly summits have been held within this process, bringing together leaders from the Western Balkans, EU member states, and relevant stakeholders to discuss and coordinate joint actions. The last summit was held in the capital of Albania, Tirana, in October 2023. This was the first time that such a summit was held outside of the European Union. These summits focus on diverse themes like economy, infrastructure, rule of law, security, and fostering youth collaboration.³

Kosovo is one of the countries that is part of the Berlin process, but what does the Berlin process mean for Kosovo?

Representing Kosovo in the Berlin Process not only provided a forum for equal engagement with regional countries and the EU, but it also strengthened Kosovo's position as an

active participant in the development of regional cooperation initiatives.

Kosovo's active participation has contributed to the strengthening of ties and cooperation among Western Balkan countries, as well as to the advancement of the Berlin-Brussels partnership objectives.⁴ Joining initiatives like the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and signing agreements like the Transport Cooperation Treaty (TCT) at the Trieste Summit are concrete steps that demonstrate Kosovo's commitment to improving its infrastructure and connectivity within the larger European framework.

Furthermore, adhering to the principles outlined in the Good Neighbourly Relations and Regional Cooperation agreements demonstrates its commitment to promoting regional stability, peace, and progress. By fulfilling these obligations and actively participating in regional initiatives, Kosovo has not only strengthened its position but has also made a significant contribution to the broader goals of promoting Western Balkan cooperation, integration, and development.⁵

However, ongoing bilateral disputes, particularly between Kosovo and Serbia and Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which stem from these two countries' opposition to Kosovo's independence, have hampered the Berlin Process. These disputes have hampered the implementation of agreements stemming from this process, hindering genuine regional cooperation and stability in the Western Balkans.⁶

1 See more on the official website of the Berlin Process at <https://www.berlinprocess.de/en/what-is-the-berlin-process>

2 Ibid.

3 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, The Berlin Process in the Western Balkans: Big Ideas, Difficult Implementation at, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022C70/>

4 See the BPRG Report, "Berlin Process for the Western Balkans: Benefits and Challenges for Kosovo, pg.13. at https://balkansgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Procesi-i-Berlinit-p%C3%ABr-Ballkanin-Per%C3%ABndimor_P%C3%ABrfitimet-dhe-sfidat-p%C3%ABr-Kosov%C3%ABn_Shqip.pdf

5 Ibid.

6 Koha Net, "Kurti seeks to implement the agreement on free movement between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina", 11



Despite these challenges, Kosovo has continued to implement the commitments stemming from the Berlin Process. In February 2023, the Kosovo Assembly ratified three Berlin Process agreements with two-thirds of the vote,⁷ making it the second country in the region to do so quickly.⁸ The ratified agreements include the Agreement on Free Movement with Identity Cards in the Western Balkans, the Agreement on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications within the Region, and the Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors, Dentists, and Architects under the Central European Free Trade Agreement framework.⁵ In October 2023, the Tirana Summit expanded the recognition of qualifications to include nurses, veterinarians, pharmacists, and midwives. These agreements were approved by the government in April 2024 after⁹ a 6-month delay, and by the Assembly in May 2024.¹⁰

In the meantime, the government has adopted the National Plan for European Integration (NPEI) 2024–2028. The NPEI is a legally binding document for all state administration bodies responsible for implementing short-term measures to meet the SAA's obligations and other criteria for integration into the European Union.

Aside from the pivotal agreements, Kosovo has committed to carrying out the Action Plans resulting from the Berlin Process in various domains, as well as the regional leaders' commitments made during the Berlin summits. These commitments are

the basis of initiatives on topics like the Common Regional Market and the Green Agenda. Kosovo is a signatory to the “Sofia Declaration,” which defines the obligations for the Western Balkans’ Green Agenda and the Declaration for the Development of the Common Regional Market in 2020.

KDI released the first monitoring report in December 2023 to assess Kosovo’s level of compliance with promises made on two of the Berlin Process’s pillars: the Green Agenda, with an emphasis on decarbonization, and the Common Regional Market, with an emphasis on digitization.¹¹

The results of the second monitoring report, covering the period of January–July 2024, will be made public below along with updated data on the above-mentioned areas.

METHODOLOGY

The second monitoring report will examine in detail the progress made by the Government of Kosovo in carrying out its commitments under the Berlin Process. This Report’s main focus will be on the Common Regional Market and the Western Balkans’ Green Agenda. The analyzed period contains developments from January to July 2024. The main audience will include MPs and parliamentary staff of the Assembly of Kosovo, especially those of committees dealing with issues related to the Berlin Process and the general public.

The progress of the implementation of the

April 2024, at <https://www.koha.net/arberi/416045/kurti-Komisionit-Europeankon-te-implemented-agreement-per-levizje-te-lire-mes-kosoves-e-bosnjies>

7 Portal Ekonomia Online, 23 February, 2023 at <https://ekonomiaonline.com/ratifikohen-tri-marreveshje-te-procesit-te-berlinit/>

8 Telegrafi, February, 2023 <https://shorturl.at/7oh3R>

9 Prime minister Office, Government Decisions from the 200th meeting <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/vendimet-e-mbledhjes-se-qeverise/>

10 Evidence of the Laws of the Assembly of Kosovo at https://www.kuvendikosoves.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/Evidencaeligjeve_YEeRbw38rY.pdf

11 See the first Monitoring Report at <https://shorturl.at/SeLz1>



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Common Regional Market Action Plans is analyzed in particular, with a focus on digitalization and the green agenda, with a particular emphasis on decarbonization. In this context, all activities undertaken by Kosovo institutions in these areas during the aforementioned period are reflected.

The main purpose of this report is to provide a detailed view on Kosovo's fulfillment of the Berlin Process commitments this year. This information will be an important resource for MPs and parliamentary staff as they assess and hold the government accountable for implementing the Berlin Process agenda. Furthermore, the Second Monitoring Report addresses the obligations of the institutions responsible for fulfilling the commitments and suggests next steps for effective implementation based on the previous report's recommendations. The report also identifies and addresses challenges that could potentially undermine progress.

The report is based on key data collection methods such as analyzing existing data sources and conducting interviews with institutions, agencies, and other relevant stakeholders. A wide range of data sources has been utilized, including official documents, reports from Western Balkans institutions and the Regional Cooperation Council, statements by regional leaders, media reports, and interviews with local institutions. For data analysis, primary data analysis, content, and interview analysis, as well as comparative methodology, have been employed. The data is presented in tables arranged in accordance with the Common Regional Market Action Plans and the Green Agenda. Furthermore, a comparison has been made between the current period and the period covered by the first Report

in order to assess progress in the implementation of Action Plan-related activities and projects.

1. PARLIAMENT'S OVERSIGHT ROLE TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT IN FULFILLING THE COMMITMENTS OF THE BERLIN PROCESS

The data provided in the first Monitoring Report has served as a good basis for MPs and parliamentary staff to track the progress of the government's implementation of the Berlin process commitments. In this sense, the Berlin process has been elevated to a high priority by the Parliament as part of its oversight function.

By giving current information to the Assembly's staff and MPs of the Kosovo Assembly for the year 2024—that is, January through July 2024—the second monitoring report seeks to further advance the Assembly's role in the Berlin process. Empowering the Kosovo Assembly to scrutinize and hold the government accountable for its commitments in the Berlin Process not only bolsters internal governance but also underscores Kosovo's commitment to regional initiatives, contributing to the broader stability and progress within the Western Balkans.

The Assembly, as the highest legislative institution in the country, is responsible for drafting and approving all legal initiatives related to the obligations that Kosovo has towards the "Berlin Process". The most important issues that the Assembly has covered in this period are the adoption of laws together with international agreements that stem from this process. During the spring session January-July 2024, the Assembly approved three draft laws



related to the Berlin process. Meanwhile, The Assembly’s ratification of international agreements has created a problematic situation.

Thus, some agreements for more than a year failed to be ratified by the MPs in the Assembly. Among the 20 agreements that were ratified during the spring session of the Assembly, 12 of them¹² are agreements related to the Berlin Process ”.

While, as explained below, a number of draft laws must still be approved by the Assembly in order for Kosovo to meet its obligations under the Common Regional Market-Digitization and Green Agenda-Decarbonization action plans.

2. HOW MUCH OF THE BERLIN PROCESS’S COMMITMENTS HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED BY KOSOVO IN THE FIELD OF DIGITALIZATION AND DECARBONIZATION?

The Kosovo government has agreed to new commitments under the Berlin process for 2023 and 2024. In November 2023, a new agreement and six joint declarations were signed at the Tirana Summit between the Western Balkan countries, which aim to deepen the Common Regional Market. The signed agreement on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications was extended to four new professions: nurses, midwives, pharmacists, and veterinary surgeons. This agreement allows citizens of the host country to practice the same profession for which they were qualified in their home country, under conditions no less favorable than those of the host country. **The Assem-**

bly of Kosovo ratified this agreement in May 2024 after a 6-month delay.

Meanwhile, the Kosovo government adopted the National Plan for European Integration (NPEI) 2024-2028 in April 2024. In the context of regional cooperation and EU integration, the Republic of Kosovo is committed to carrying out the obligations arising from the Common Regional Market Action Plans and the Western Balkans Green Agenda under the Berlin Process.¹³

The data on the extent to which Kosovo has fulfilled the obligations arising from the Berlin process are presented in detail below and in the two Appendices to this report: the Common Regional Market part of Digitalization and the Green Agenda part of Decarbonisation.

2.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN ON COMMON REGIONAL MARKET: DIGITALIZATION

Action Plan	Level of Implementation			
	None	Small	Average	Transformative
Common Regional Market: Digitalization			√	

Even during this reporting period (January-July 2024) Kosovo has continued to have moderate progress in implementing the Action Plan on Common Regional Market, specifically the part of digitalization stemming from the Berlin Process.

12 Klan Kosova, accessed at <https://klankosova.tv/marrevshjet-nderkombetare-10-votohen-dy-rrezohen-dhe-nje-shtyhet/>
13 See more at <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=42231>



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Kosovo has made significant progress in expanding internet access, with nearly 100% of citizens having access since 2022.

Through the Kosovo Digital Economy Program (KODE), supported by the World Bank, fiber-optic internet has been extended to 203 villages, including schools and health centers, enabling every resident to have high-speed internet access, putting Kosovo ahead of the countries of the region. This project has included the interconnection of six mobile towers with fiber optic technology for 5G networks, significantly improving the quality of mobile internet services. The use of 4G and 5G mobile networks is steadily increasing, providing better opportunities for communication and online services to citizens.

In addition, Kosovo has advanced in improving digital infrastructure and academic and research network connectivity. The Kosovo Research and Education Network (KREN) is connected to the pan-European GEANT network, enabling better access to resources and opportunities for international cooperation. The plan to connect 220 schools to this network by the end of 2024 will help to improve educational quality and expand scientific research opportunities. The Education Strategy 2022-2026 focuses on improving citizens' digital skills, including the growth of the information technology sector and the establishment of educational institutions in this field. These efforts aim to significantly improve young people's technological skills while also increasing Kosovo's competitiveness on a global level. However, Kosovo's strategies and plans have failed to adequately address digital literacy for marginalized groups and minorities, including the Roma community. Such a lack of inclusion stifles opportunities for

growth and equality in society.

Kosovo has improved the quality of its statistics by conducting a new population census in April 2024 and sending more frequent data to Eurostat. However, further progress in this area must be made by strengthening the Statistical Agency to ensure the most accurate and comprehensive data collection and reporting.

Kosovo has not yet managed to achieve some important objectives stemming from the Action Plan on the Common Regional Market, the Digitalization part. **Efforts to develop smart cities are still in the early stages.** Unlike the capital city of Pristina, which has made some progress in this regard, other cities have made little or no progress in developing the necessary structures and technologies for smart cities. This shows the need for further efforts and focused strategies to advance in this respect.

In regional terms, there is still a need for further reductions in Roaming prices and an RLAH+ (Roam Like at Home Plus) model to achieve zero Roaming charges, which would provide great benefits for citizens in Kosovo and the region. Furthermore, Kosovo faces additional challenges due to poor relations with Serbia and Bosnia, which impede progress in regional cooperation and the implementation of common strategies for digital development and regional ties.

Kosovo has adopted cybersecurity laws and strategies, but it still faces numerous cyber threats. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen regional cooperation to better cope with these threats and improve cyber defense at the regional level. Appendix 1 of this Report contains detailed data for each item in the Digitalization Action Plan.

Based on the data of this period, KDI pres-



ents the following recommendations to the Kosovo Assembly, aiming to strengthen its oversight role towards the Government, in monitoring the implementation of the obligations arising from the Berlin process by the Government:

Recommendations

1. The Assembly should oversee the implementation of digitalization-related laws, strategies, and action plans such as the Law on Cybersecurity, the National Cyber Security Strategy 2023-2027, the Education Strategy 2022-2026, the Kosovo Digital Economy Programme (KODE), and the Digital Agenda 2030. It should also begin the process of expanding these strategies and programs to include disadvantaged communities, such as people with disabilities and non-majority communities, particularly the Roma community, by providing training and digital opportunities for these groups.
2. The Assembly should monitor the process of expanding the internet by requesting information from the government about the expansion and operation of the internet in the northern part, as well as the companies that provide internet services in that region.
3. The Assembly should **draft a Law on Artificial Intelligence** in line with EU legislation, given recent developments in the field. The adoption of an artificial intelligence law is critical to ensuring the ethical use of artificial technologies and stimulating in-

novation by creating an environment that protects citizens from potential risks and misuses.

4. The Assembly should advocate for **the improvement of the quality of Kosovo’s statistics** by requesting from the Government the strengthening of capacities for the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, in terms of human resources and other necessary capacities.
5. The Assembly should be more active in monitoring and participating in innovative developments such as initiatives for the creation of smart cities, cooperating with municipalities in this regard, and providing the necessary assistance.

Finally, the Assembly of Kosovo’s active participation is critical to meeting the obligations of the Common Regional Market Action Plan, which is part of the digitalization process. Kosovo can only improve digital infrastructure, develop AI policies, and advance accurate statistics through active oversight and Assembly-coordinated initiatives, thereby contributing to the creation of a regionally integrated and competitive market.

2.2 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN ON GREEN AGENDA: DECARBONIZATION

	Level of Implementation				
	Action Plan	None	Small	Average	Transformative
Green Agenda: Decarbonization				√	



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In December 2023, the Kosovo Assembly adopted the Law on Climate Change, which partially complies with EU regulations and directives on energy and climate governance. This law calls for the establishment of the Division on Climate Change and an increase in the number of staff at the Ministry of Environment to improve effectiveness in this area. The law also requires the development of bylaws and includes clear targets for renewable energy, energy efficiency, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Kosovo aims for 32% of gross energy consumption to come from renewable sources, and for primary and final energy consumption to be limited to 2.7 and 1.8 Mtoe, respectively.

The Law on the Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources, also adopted in December 2023, sets a binding target for renewable energy by 2030. It regulates the construction of new capacity and establishes support mechanisms for electricity and heating from renewable sources. Kosovo is currently in the early stages of developing carbon pricing mechanisms. However, in the long run, it intends to implement a carbon price system aligned with the EU ETS price level by 2030, in accordance with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

While the Draft Laws that remain in the procedure related to the environmental and climate aspect, such as the Draft Law on Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Draft Law on Water Resources Management, are still awaiting approval. While the new Draft Law on Energy Efficiency, Draft Law on Electricity, and Draft Law on Inspection in the Fields of Environment, Waters, Nature, Spatial Planning, Construction, and Housing are still being drafted.

Kosovo's Energy Strategy 2022-2031 includes concrete targets for the distribution and consumption of renewable energy sources, as well as efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 16.3% by 2030 compared to 2016. Kosovo has made some progress, such as increasing energy efficiency in public and residential buildings and investing in renewable energy equipment and systems. Kosovo intends to hold its first wind power auction this year, with a capacity of 150 MW.

Despite these efforts, **Kosovo still faces challenges in implementing climate change measures and needs to adopt a Decarbonization Strategy, as well as improve energy efficiency legislation in line with EU directives. A Climate Adaptation Strategy is necessary to tackle environmental and climate challenges in Kosovo.**

Overall, Kosovo has taken significant steps toward aligning its climate policies with those of the EU, but much more work remains in terms of developing legislation and implementing concrete measures to combat climate change and increase the use of renewable energy sources.

Kosovo should accelerate the drafting of the National Energy and Climate Plan, including concrete measures to achieve clean energy targets and reduce emissions, according to EU standards. It is also important for Kosovo to begin developing a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and updating the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan.

To improve environmental protection, Kosovo should integrate nature-based solutions such as reforestation and waste management, strengthen environmental laws, and raise public awareness. Furthermore, Kosovo



vo must decide whether to align the carbon price with the EU Emissions Trading System or to implement its own measures, including a detailed plan for implementing and monitoring that system.

In the energy sector, Kosovo must adopt new Draft Laws on Energy Efficiency and Electricity, draft the Decarbonization Strategy, and complete the adoption of other pending draft laws. Revising legislation to support decarbonisation and developing a strategy for renovating nearly zero-energy buildings is also essential.

In terms of transportation, Kosovo should draft railway laws and implement the Multimodal Transport Strategy, which incorporates advanced technologies and digital traffic management solutions. Improving infrastructure and collaborating with international partners are critical for sustaining and expanding these initiatives.

Kosovo should also aggressively participate in the European Climate Pact, promote the use of renewable energy sources, and quicken the process of phase-out of coal. This includes investments in renewable energy, implementing energy poverty programs, and promoting sustainable transport.

Appendix 2 of this Report contains detailed data for each item in the Decarbonisation Action Plan.

Based on the data of this period, KDI presents the following recommendations to the Kosovo Assembly, aiming to strengthen its oversight role towards the Government, in monitoring the implementation of the obligations arising from the Berlin process by the Government:

Recommendations

- The Kosovo Assembly should approve the environmental and climate-related draft laws that are still in the works, such as the Draft Law on Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Draft Law on Water Resource Management. Also, to put into action the initiative for Draft Laws such as the Draft Law on Energy Efficiency, the Draft Law on Electricity, and the Draft Law on Inspection in the Fields of Environment, Waters, Nature, Spatial Planning, Construction, and Housing.
- The Assembly should request that the Government pass the secondary legislation required to implement the Law on Climate Change and the Law on the Promotion of the Use of Renewable Energy Resources. These acts should include specific measures to meet the 2030 emissions reduction and growth targets for renewable energy.
- Kosovo's Assembly should urge the government to expedite the completion of the National Energy and Climate Plan, which includes concrete measures to meet clean energy and emission reduction targets in accordance with EU guidelines.
- The Kosovo Assembly should request that the Government draft a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and update the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, which will expire in 2021.
- The Kosovo Assembly urges the government to actively participate in



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the European Climate Pact by harmonizing its environmental policies with those of the EU and improving its implementation capacity. If full participation is not possible, Kosovo should establish national and regional mechanisms to raise public awareness and involve citizens in climate change solutions.

- Kosovo's Assembly should review and improve legislation to support the energy sector's decarbonization, including requiring the government to develop a Decarbonization Strategy.
- The Assembly of Kosovo should monitor the implementation of the law on promoting the use of renewable resources.

ANNEX

1. DETAILED DATA ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON REGIONAL MARKET ACTION PLAN: DIGITALIZATION

COMMON REGIONAL MARKET—REGIONAL DIGITAL AREA				
Activity	Time limit	Responsible Institutions	Progress (policies, activities)	Next Steps
7.1. Digital infrastructure and connectivity	2024	Ministry of Economy	<p>The Kosovo Digital Economy Program (KODE) is being implemented by the Ministry of Economy, with support from the World Bank. Through this program, private sector companies have received grants to invest in the expansion of the Internet in rural areas. All 203 villages, including 105 schools and 43 healthcare facilities, now have internet access via fibre optic cable. As of mid-2022, every Kosovo resident has access to the Internet.</p> <p>More than six mobile towers have been connected to fiber optic technology in 2021 and through the first quarter of 2024 in order to prepare for 5G networks.</p> <p>With the continuous growth of 4G and 5G mobile networks, the percentage of people in Kosovo who have mobile Internet access is currently close to 100%.¹⁴</p> <p>Similar data were confirmed by the EC's Kosovo 2023 report as well.¹⁵</p>	<p>Kosovo should increase the use of Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) funds and other resources to further advance digital infrastructure. Additionally, to concentrate on giving 90% of households access to internet speeds of at least 30 Mbps and making sure that 75% of households have access to speeds of at least 100 Mbps, with the possibility of upgrading to 1 Gbps.</p>
2. Establish Broadband Internet Competence Offices (BCOs) in the Western Balkans (where none currently exist) and strengthen their capacity to support broad internet access.	2021	Ministry of Economy	<p>The Kosovo Office for Broadband Competences (BCO) is housed within the Ministry of Economy and oversees the project to expand fixed broadband infrastructure. The Kosovo BCO collaborates with other EU BCOs and attends meetings organized by the network.¹⁶</p>	<p>The Kosovo government should strengthen the Broadband Internet Competence Office (BCO) by increasing collaboration with European Union BCOs to facilitate knowledge exchange and integration into the EU network. The Action Plan calls for enhancing the capacity of the BCOs and improving cooperation and integration with the EU BCOs.</p>

¹⁴ KDI interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response in May-June 2024.

¹⁵ European Commission, Country Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 69 at <https://shorturl.at/tdAuI>

¹⁶ KDI interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response in May-June 2024.

3. Interconnection of academic and research networks in the Western Balkans (WB6), with the support and cooperation of the GEANT network	2022	Ministry of Economy	<p>The Action Plan aims to achieve interconnectivity between academic and research networks in the Western Balkans (WB6) by 2022, as well as to promote regional cooperation and innovation.¹⁷</p> <p>Kosovo has made progress in improving academic and research network connectivity. The CODE project established the Kosovo Research and Education Network (KREN) in 2021, and its Data Center became operational at the end of the year, offering Microsoft Azure and other services to higher education institutions (HEIs). In 2022, KREN successfully connected all HEIs to the pan-European GEANT network. Efforts continued in 2023 and early 2024 to connect 100 primary and secondary schools to KREN, with the goal of reaching 220 schools by the end of 2024. KREN has also established close collaboration with GEANT and the national regional research and education networks (NREN).¹⁸</p>	<p>To improve further, Kosovo should expand the KREN network to include more schools, strengthen collaboration with regional NRENs, and promote initiatives that encourage technological advancement and innovation.</p>
4. Develop a 5G roadmap for the Western Balkans (WB6) and ensure effective implementation within the defined timeline.	2023	Ministry of Economy	<p>In Kosovo, the Digital Agenda strategy covering the period up to 2030 has been adopted in June 2023, which includes plans for the development of the 5G network.¹⁹</p> <p>The Regulatory Authority of Electronic and Postal Communications (ARKEP) approved the Frequency Release Plan, which includes key frequency bands for 5G and allocates the 800 MHz and 3.5 GHz bands to existing operators. 5G coverage is available in city centers as of early 2023, and by 2024/25, it is expected to cover key corridors such as Morina-Prishtina and Prishtina-Hani i Elezit.</p>	<p>To better align with the action plan, Kosovo must improve regional coordination by collaborating more closely with the Western Balkan economies to standardize 5G spectrum and licensing. It is critical to ensure that all major industrial cities have 5G coverage, as well as to continue the planned 5G coverage of the main corridors Morina-Prishtina and Prishtina-Hani i Elezit by the end of 2024/25.</p>
5. Reduce roaming charges intra-WB6 and EU-WB through implementation of WB Roaming Agreement and the Roadmap for lowering the roaming charges between EU and WB			<p>Kosovo has successfully implemented the Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA) with the Western Balkan countries, which went into effect on July 1, 2021, while adhering to the terms and criteria of the agreement.²⁰</p> <p>RRA is considered as one of the most important achievements of the Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans as well as Multi-annual Action Plan on Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans and Common Regional Market.²¹</p> <p>The EU's 2023 Kosovo Report also confirmed Kosovo's constructive participation in high-level regional dialogue on digital transformation and the Regional Roaming Agreement.²²</p>	<p>Kosovo should conduct regular reviews of the Regional Roaming Agreement's effectiveness, work on implementing the EU-BU roaming tariff reduction roadmap, and continue to collaborate with regional and EU partners to improve and expand roaming agreements. In addition, it should communicate the benefits of reduced roaming charges to the public and businesses to maximize the impact of the agreement.</p>

17 See the Action Plan on the Common Regional Market at <https://www.rcc.int/docs/543/common-regional-marKomisionitEuropiant-action-plan>

18 KDI interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response in May-June 2024.

19 See Kosovo Digital Agenda 2030 at <https://arKomisionitEvropianp-rks.org/desk/inc/media/82582FB3-CD31-4D3D-A2AA-F7CC21ACADCA.pdf>

20 KDI interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response in May-June 2024.

21 See more about Roaming at https://www.rcc.int/priority_areas/53/roaming

22 EU Country Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 69.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

5.1. The final phase of completing the Regional Roaming Agreement	2021	Ministry of Economy	<p>The Action Plan envisaged Zero retail roaming charges within WB6 as of 1 July 2021;</p> <p>The ultimate goal of RRA, to implement the Roam Like at Home (RLAH) regime in the region on July 1, 2021, was met, and a roaming free WB region was established, which means that WB consumers do not pay extra charges for calls, SMS, and mobile data while roaming in the region, as they do at home.²³ The introduction of RLAH regime from 1 July 2021 resulted in significant increase in consumption/user of all roaming services in the region, thus confirming the high price sensitivity of WB roamers.²⁴</p>	Kosovo should monitor the Regional Roaming Agreement, finalize and implement the roadmap for further lowering EU-BU roaming tariffs, improve coordination with regional partners, and inform consumers about the benefits and changes in roaming tariffs.
5.2. Finalize the Roadmap for lowering the roaming charges between EU and WB and effective implementation in line with the defined timeline	2021	Ministry of Economy	<p>The Action Plan foresees reduced roaming charges between WB and EU in accordance with the points agreed in the Roadmap.</p> <p>At the EU-Western Balkans Summit on December 6, 2022, 38 telecommunications operators from the EU and Western Balkans signed a Roaming Declaration that will reduce roaming charges between regions beginning October 1, 2023. The agreement will lower the maximum retail price for 1 gigabyte of data from €18 in 2023 to €14 in 2026 and €9 in 2028, with annual revisions planned. However, current voluntary agreements do not fully address users' needs. Therefore, further reductions in roaming prices and the introduction of an RLAH+ model are needed to finally eliminate roaming charges altogether.²⁵</p>	To advance further, Kosovo should work on reducing roaming charges. Introducing an RLAH+ model during the transition period will help to ensure more effective and uniform policies. Furthermore, Kosovo should regularly assess the impact of these changes and adapt as needed, while also raising consumer and business awareness of the benefits of lower roaming charges.

7.2. DIGITAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCE

1. Developing digital skills strategies and reaching an agreement on short and mid-term regional digital upskilling actions	2022 - 2023	Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	<p>The Kosovo Government approved the Education Strategy 2022-2026 in November 2022 prepared by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology. One of the key areas of this Strategy is Digital Education, which focuses on improving digital skills for citizens.²⁶</p> <p>However, the EC Country Report 2023 has said that, for the successful implementation, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MESTI) needs to ensure the necessary human and financial resources. The restructuring of the MESTI is still pending.²⁷</p> <p>One of the Strategy's objectives is to have a "digitally skilled population."²⁸</p>	Kosovo should develop detailed digital skills strategies, identify gaps in digital skills for different groups, and strengthen regional cooperation in digital enhancement actions.
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²³ See more about Roaming at https://www.rcc.int/priority_areas/53/roaming

²⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

²⁵ KDI interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response in May-June 2024.

²⁶ Regional Cooperation Council, Common Regional Market Report 2022, p. 34.

²⁷ European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 105.

²⁸ Regional Cooperation Council, Common Regional Market Report 2022, p. 34.

<p>2. Create a repository of courses and other training programs developed by various organizations, including MOOCs with established universities, based on the Western Balkans gap analysis and digital skills needs for targeted groups.</p>	<p>2022 - 2023</p>	<p>Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation</p>	<p>The Action Plan goal in this regard is to increase digital skills for various groups. At least 50 people per year are trained.</p> <p>To address the digital skills gap, Kosovo has trained over 1,500 beneficiaries through the EU IPA project and another 900 young people through the World Bank's CODE Project, with the goal of reaching 2,000 by the end of 2024. Furthermore, the Ministry of Economy is promoting IT sector development by establishing a Technical Park in Prishtina to foster private sector growth and a Digital Centre of Excellence in Prizren to advance knowledge of new ICT trends such as 5G, IoT, AI, big data, and 3D printing.²⁹</p>	<p>It is critical to expand training programs to reach more beneficiaries while also keeping them up to date on current technological trends. Moreover, raising public awareness about the possibilities of developing digital skills will help foster employment and economic growth.</p>
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<p>3. Develop Digital Education Action Plans and promote equality in access, in particular for disadvantaged groups and minorities, particularly Roma</p>	<p>The Action Plan foresees Aligned actions in digital education in the region and Aligned Standards with EU Digital Competence Framework.</p> <p>In 2022, the Kosovo government adopted the Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in Kosovo Society 2022-2026, as well as the Action Plan 2022-2024.³⁰ However, this Strategy does not provide for digital education for disadvantaged groups and minorities. Even the 2030 Digital Agenda does not foresee any special measures for these groups. Similarly, no measure is foreseen with the Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kosovo 2021-2023.³¹</p>	<p>The Kosovo government should focus on implementing Digital Education Action Plans that are aligned with regional initiatives and EU standards to ensure equal access, particularly for disadvantaged groups and minorities, particularly Roma. The implementation of the Kosovo Digital Agenda 2030, incorporating inclusion strategies for these groups, will help achieve digital equity in society.</p>
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THE DIGITAL ECONOMY IN THE ERA OF NEW ICT TECHNOLOGIES

<p>1. Organizing regular high-level meetings, including the Annual Digital Summit, to ensure the digital agenda remains at the forefront of regional transformation.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>The Action Plan foresees high-level government-business collaboration on digital transformation challenges maintained through Annual Digital Summit;</p> <p>Promoting competitive, innovative digital ideas and solutions based on regionally agreed targets/businesses.</p> <p>So far, there have been six digital summits held in the Western Balkan countries. The last digital summit was held in 2023 in Sarajevo. Meanwhile, the fourth Digital Summit 2021 held in Podgorica and the one in 2022 held in Pristina, highlighted the priorities for improving the digital environment in the Western Balkans for the next year^{32,33}.</p> <p>Furthermore, regular ICT ministerial meetings serve as a high-level platform for discussing key regional actions toward a more digitally connected region.³⁴</p>	<p>Kosovo should promote competitive and innovative digital ideas and solutions that align with regional countries' and businesses' agreed-upon objectives, while also ensuring that these initiatives are prioritized and supported at the national and regional levels.</p>
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29 KDI interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response in May-June 2024.

30 See the Strategy for inclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities in Kosovo society 2022-2026 and the Action Plan 2022-2024 at <https://shorturl.at/bx1bn>

31 See the Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kosovo 2021-2023 at <https://shorturl.at/RUiiF>

32 Regional Cooperation Council, Common Regional Market Report 2021, p. 15.

33 Regional Cooperation Council, Common Regional Market Report 2022, p. 21.

34 Regional Cooperation Council, Common Regional Market Report 2021, p. 15.

2. Approximation of meta-data standards for open data at regional level based on EU standards, to be implemented throughout the region and to foster the open data principle	2023	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Administration	<p>The Action Plan envisions applying EU open data standards at the regional level.</p> <p>Also, use of data for governmental and wider public sector needs and research is enabled.</p> <p>In order to increase the transparency and accountability of the state administration, the Government of Kosovo is implementing the Open Data Initiative, managed by the Ministry of Public Administration.³⁵</p>	<p>As stated also in the EU Country Report 2023, Kosovo still needs to align with the EU on open data and the re-use of public sector information.</p> <p>Kosovo needs to work on aligning its open data standards with EU standards. In addition, Kosovo should promote the use of open data to meet broad public sector and research needs, while ensuring that the data is accessible and usable for these purposes.</p>
3. Reaching an agreement on regional interoperability of toll services in West Bengal.	2022 - 2024	<p>Ministry of the Interior</p> <p>Ministry of the Interior</p> <p>Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers</p>	<p>The Action Plan calls for Western Balkan countries to agree on a unified payment system to allow for uninterrupted cross-border travel.</p> <p>The path towards achieving interoperability involves legal, technical, and operational considerations, including compliance with EU directives, harmonized protocols for data exchange, and investment estimates for system upgrades. Western Balkan countries should consider implementing a phased approach to unify their electronic toll systems. Leveraging existing infrastructure and gradual alignment with EU standards would pave the way for seamless interoperability, ensuring cost-effective operations and facilitating regional integration.³⁶</p> <p>Regarding the travel time, according to the World Bank, “delays at crossings in the Western Balkans are five times longer than in many EU countries, and trucks spend some 26 million hours at crossings in the region each year – that is nearly 3,000 years”.³⁷Top of Form</p>	<p>Kosovo should work with other Western Balkan countries to establish a common fee payment system that will ensure uninterrupted data exchange and coordination. This will help reduce travel time and improve transport for citizens.</p>
4. Agreement on principles and standards used for smart cities, based on EU standards, with the aim of ensuring data and service interoperability.	2023	Ministry of Local Government Administration and Municipalities	<p>The Action Plan goal is to have an improved exchange of standards applied for key services, best practices, etc. Also create a network of smart cities across the Western Balkans.</p> <p>In this regard, the Smart City Kosova Project involves five universities from various countries working together to develop a National Strategy for Smart and Sustainable Urban Development as well as specific Smart City strategies for seven Kosovo cities: Prishtina, Prizren, Ferizaj, Peja, Gjilan, Vushtrri, and Lipjan. The project focuses on the use of digital technologies to improve city services, reduce emissions, and improve urban mobility and public spaces. It also aims at citizen participation, data-driven decision-making, and sustainable development. The project is divided into three phases: data collection and prioritization, strategy development, and action plan creation, with ongoing monitoring to ensure successful implementation.³⁸</p>	<p>Kosovo’s smart city initiatives should comply with EU standards to ensure data and service interoperability. Furthermore, Kosovo should work with other Western Balkan countries to share best practices, establish common standards, and participate in a regional network of smart cities.</p>

35 Kosovo’s Ministry of Internal Affairs, Open Data at, <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/ap/page.aspx?id=2,33>

36 Transport Community Report, Tolling interoperability in Western Balkans Executive, at <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/TC-WB-Interoperability-ExecSummary-202211.pdf>

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

5. Conduct regional actions to promote Artificial Intelligence (AI) in specific areas based on EU practices.	2024	Ministry of Economy	<p>The Action Plan foresees the establishment of the Western Balkans High-level Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI); regionally agreed AI aspects; an action plan prepared for the agreed-upon aspects; and synergy with EU-led AI activities;</p> <p>In terms of artificial intelligence (AI), the Western Balkans have committed to forming a high-level regional working group that will work on all aspects of AI to ensure synergies with the EU. This was agreed upon during the 5th Western Balkans Digital Summit, which took place in Pristina, Kosovo, on September 21 and 22, 2022.³⁹ To better address cybersecurity threats, the WB decided to strengthen cooperation not only within the region but also with the EU, specifically the European Commission and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity. The aim is to increase protection of critical infrastructure, preventing and detecting cyber threats, as well as detecting and effectively responding to incidents⁴⁰</p> <p>According to a SHARE Foundation study, Western Balkan countries currently lack the necessary rules to meet the demands of the digital age. Existing legislation is frequently outdated, fragmented, and fails to meet European standards, particularly in the management of artificial intelligence.⁴¹</p>	In May 2024, the EU adopted a Law on Artificial Intelligence. This should serve as an example for Kosovo and other countries in the region as they draft AI legislation.
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PRIORITY AREA: REGIONAL ACTIONS

6. Undertaking regional activities to facilitate Western Balkans participation in European Union High Performance Computing (HPC) programmes.	2023 - 2024	Ministry of Economy	<p>The Action Plan foresees that by 2024, all Western Balkan economies should be integrated with the EU's high-performance computing network. Furthermore, the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) should be used more extensively to support HPC projects and investments in the region.</p> <p>The European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC) aims to improve the quality of life of European citizens, advance science, boost industrial competitiveness, and ensure Europe's technological autonomy. It is a legal and funding entity founded in 2018 and based in Luxembourg. It pools together the resources of the European Union, 32 European countries, and three private partners. Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia are the only members from the Western Balkans.⁴² Kosovo has yet to use the services provided by Euro HPC. However, there is an ongoing assessment in Kosovo about the potential use of these services in future endeavors.⁴³</p> <p>The criteria for accessing EuroHPC resources are similar to those for accessing general HPC services. They often include eligibility requirements, an application process outlining computational needs, compliance with usage policies, expertise demonstrations, potential fees, and resource availability management during high demand. However, specific details may differ depending on the Euro HPC initiative and its partner facilities.</p>	Kosovo should actively participate in regional initiatives to connect to the EU's high-performance computer network. Furthermore, it should expand the use of the Western Balkans Investment Framework to provide financing and support for HPC projects and investments, ensuring effective participation in the EU's computer infrastructure. Top of Form
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39 EU official webpage: Western Balkans work jointly on improving digital transformation at <https://rb.gy/fbonjt>
40 Ibid.
41 See this study at <https://www.sharefoundation.info/en/digital-ecosystem-of-the-western-balkans-from-regulatory-gap-to-systemic-approach/>
42 EU official webpage, The European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking at <https://rb.gy/fbonjt>
43 KDI Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy, November 2023, Prishtina.

<p>7. Undertaking regional activities to improve the availability, analysis, and monitoring of high-quality digital economy statistics, building on the EU Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) and the International Telecommunications Union's ICT Development Index (ITU).</p>	<p>2022</p>	<p>The action plan focuses on monitoring regional digital competitiveness, identifying priority areas for data collection to measure DESI indicators, and making better use of these data for reporting and analysis.</p> <p>Kosovo has some level of preparation in the area of statistics. Progress was reported in 2023, particularly in improving data collection methodology, transmitting data to Eurostat, and implementing Eurostat recommendations. Communication among statistical institutions has improved, but technical coordination and use of available administrative data remain insufficient.⁴⁴</p> <p>Some energy, social, and short-term statistics in the services sector are now sent to Eurostat monthly, whereas they were previously sent quarterly.⁴⁵</p> <p>The Kosovo population census, which will be conducted in April 2024, will provide updated demographic data, allowing for better tracking of digital competition, collection of DESI data, and reporting accuracy.</p>	<p>Kosovo should increase the quantity of statistical products sent to Eurostat. To accomplish this, the capacities of the Kosovo Agency of Statistics must be increased.</p>
<p>8. Regional cooperation for the exchange of good practices in the field of digital transformation, particularly e-government.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Public Administration</p> <p>The Action Plan foresees new and improved partnerships for digital transformation and e-government development, with at least two regional events organized annually.</p> <p>In Kosovo, the e-government portal is operational. The platform offers over 150 fully digitalized services.⁴⁶ It has significantly expanded its e-government array of services and announced plans to streamline and digitize permits and licenses on the same platform.⁴⁷</p> <p>During 2023, Kosovo's e-government strategy 2023-2027 was also adopted.⁴⁸</p>	<p>Kosovo should develop and strengthen partnerships with Western Balkan countries, with a focus on knowledge sharing and mutual capacity building for digital transformation and e-governance. This will support the effective implementation of digital initiatives and the development of e-government services that benefit citizens.</p>

⁴⁴ European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 96.

⁴⁷ Ibid. pg. 103.

⁴⁸ See the eGovernment Strategy here, <https://rb.gy/7h760z>

7.4. TRUST AND SECURITY

<p>1. An agreement on minimum technical standards and specifications to allow the exchange of data and documents, as well as conduct pilot activities</p>	<p>2021 Pilot- ing 2022 - 2023</p>	<p>All institutions and agencies</p>	<p>The action plan envisages facilitating the movement of services throughout the region. In addition, the exchange of data and documents is being piloted.</p> <p>On December 6, 2021, the Kosovo Assembly passed the Law on Electronic Identification and Reliable Services for Electronic Transactions. In December 2022, a package of secondary legislation (ten regulations) necessary for the law's implementation was adopted.</p> <p>Following the implementation of this law, the IPA-funded project "EU Support for Digitalization of Businesses through ICT" is being implemented, which will result in the creation of an eID System and the implementation of electronic identification and authentication. By the end of 2024, this project should be complete.⁴⁹</p> <p>However, in Kosovo, data quality and data exchange across various agencies for tax administration continue to be a challenge.⁵⁰</p> <p>At the regional level, CEFTA TRACES NT was launched in July 2022 and was piloted to enable data and document exchange related to phytosanitary certificates and common health entry documents. The new version of the Transparency Pack is hosted in the CEFTA cloud and represents a significant improvement over the previous state of play. The system incorporates cutting-edge technology, making it more secure and robust, as well as easier to maintain. All databases have been functionally and technically enhanced, with accompanying user manuals distributed and users trained.⁵¹</p>	<p>Within Kosovo, the police, the Tax Administration, the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Cadastral Registry Agency, and municipal authorities should work together more closely to exchange data.</p> <p>Kosovo should work with regional partners to establish technical standards for the exchange of data and documents and conduct pilot projects to test and facilitate these processes, improving the movement of services across the region.</p>
<p>2. Aligning regional actions to ensure the protection of personal data and privacy in Western Balkans, based on EU standards</p>	<p>2023</p>	<p>The Information and Privacy Agency</p>	<p>The plan foresees protection of personal data and privacy in a uniform manner throughout the region is ensured.</p> <p>Kosovo's personal data protection laws are closely aligned with EU legislation. The Information and Privacy Agency oversees law enforcement. The legal framework, including regulations and guidelines for controllers and inspections, has been strengthened. Despite budget and manpower constraints, the Agency handles complaints about access to public documents and data protection in an independent and effective manner.⁵²</p> <p>SIGMA and other regional organizations organized a high-level data protection event in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership Region in September 2023. Representatives from 11 countries, including six WB countries, discussed challenges and opportunities, emphasizing the need for international cooperation and the importance of adapting Data Protection Authorities to emerging technologies.⁵³</p>	<p>Kosovo needs to further strengthen the Information and Privacy Agency's capacities through increased resources and manpower, in order to increase the efficiency of data protection.</p> <p>Additionally, Kosovo should collaborate with regional partners to ensure long-term data protection throughout the Western Balkans. This includes the adoption of EU-compliant regulations and the implementation of uniform measures to protect personal data and privacy across the region.</p>

49 KDI interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response during May-June 2024.

50 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 98.

51 Regional Cooperation Council, Common Regional Market Report 2022, p. 16

52 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 31.

53 See more at <https://rb.gy/c2zq8e>

<p>3. Developing mentoring programs for Western Balkans Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs) and other institutions as part of long-term collaboration with advanced CSIRTs and other partners.</p>	<p>2023</p>	<p>Ministry of the Interior</p>	<p>The Action Plan calls for the creation of mentoring programs for CSIRTs and Western Balkan institutions to help them prevent, manage, and recover from cyber threats, in collaboration with advanced CSIRTs and partners.</p> <p>In Kosovo, the Cyber Security Law was approved by the Kosovo Assembly in February 2023. Furthermore, the National Cyber Security Strategy 2023-2027 was adopted in September 2023.</p> <p>In March 2024, the State Cyber Security Training Center was inaugurated, aiming to increase cyber security through specialized training and support for both public and private sectors.⁵⁴</p> <p>According to BIRN research conducted in June 2023, cyberattacks increased significantly from 2020 to 2023, particularly in the Balkans. This increase is attributed to increased Internet use and reliance on biometric and digital identity technologies. Countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia have faced increased cyber threats. Kosovo has responded by strengthening its cybersecurity framework. The findings highlight the critical need for increased public awareness, improved cybersecurity policies, and greater regional cooperation to address these emerging threats and protect critical digital infrastructure.⁵⁵</p> <p>On October 16, 2023, during the Berlin Process summit in Tirana, a treaty was signed to establish the Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Center (WB3C) as an international organization. This action aims to boost the region's cyber resilience by providing cybersecurity training and encouraging cooperation on cybercrime. The WB3C, which is expected to be operational by 2025, will bring together regional and international partners to improve cybersecurity and strengthen ties between the Western Balkans and the EU.⁵⁶</p>	<p>Kosovo should enhance its cybersecurity by cooperating with the Western Balkan countries to strengthen cyber defense capabilities. This includes participating in joint training programs, sharing best practices, and developing regional cyber threat response strategies. It is critical to establish and improve national cybersecurity incident response teams (CSIRTs), as well as participate in mentoring programs with more advanced CSIRTs. Furthermore, Kosovo should exchange and coordinate information on a regular basis with regional and international partners in order to develop a more advanced cyber defense infrastructure.</p>
<p>4. Strengthening cybersecurity capacities in the WB region through cooperation with the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA)</p>	<p>2021 - 2024</p>	<p>Ministry of the Interior</p>	<p>The action plan calls for strengthening cybersecurity in the Western Balkans in collaboration with the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) by improving Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs), technical training, and information sharing to protect critical infrastructure.</p> <p>In May 2023 EU launched "EU Kosovo Home Affairs Programme," a significant initiative aimed at strengthening the alignment of Kosovo's home affairs sectors with European standards and best practices. The program aims to address critical areas of reform in Kosovo, including the protection of critical infrastructure and cybersecurity. The project will help the Ministry of the Interior identify and designate national and European critical infrastructures, as well as develop operator security plans. And it aims to align the legal and institutional framework of Kosovo with EU standards.⁵⁷</p>	<p>Kosovo should prioritize resolving bilateral disputes, particularly with Serbia and Bosnia, in order to improve regional cybersecurity cooperation. Integration into EU security frameworks such as ENISA and participation in inclusive regional initiatives are also essential. Top of Form</p>

54 See more at <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/blog/the-state-training-center-for-cyber-security-is-inaugurated/>

55 See BIRN's article at <https://rb.gy/nef04z>

56 See more at <https://rb.gy/q3iesb>

57 EU official webpage, EU Launches Kosovo Home Affairs Programme to Strengthen Cooperation and Rule of Law in Kosovo at, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/eu-launches-kosovo-home-affairs-programme-strengthen-cooperation-and-rule-law-kosovo_en?s=321

5. Enhancing the resilience of cyberspace in WB through increased participation of business community in strengthening cybersecurity capacities in WB	2022 - 2023	Ministry of the Interior	<p>The action plan calls for greater private sector involvement in strengthening cybersecurity in the Western Balkans. It entails creating collaboration models and increasing information and knowledge exchange between businesses, cyber experts, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>In Kosovo, the adopted Cyber Security Law requires the Cyber Security Agency, established by this Law, to establish a communication platform with citizens and businesses that will be available 24/7 for reporting cyber incidents.⁵⁸</p> <p>Furthermore, the business community and civil society will be represented on the State Council for Cyber Security, an independent advisory body comprised of all stakeholders.⁵⁹</p> <p>At the regional level, Kosovo's National Cyber Security Strategy 2023-2027 envisions increasing the country's presence in international and regional cyber security organizations and forums. Furthermore, promoting national collaboration across all sectors and positioning Kosovo as a competent actor in international cooperation at both the regional and global levels.⁶⁰</p>	<p>To strengthen regional cybersecurity efforts, Kosovo should increase its engagement with businesses, cyber experts, and stakeholders. Implement the new Law on Cyber Security aspects, such as establishing a 24/7 platform for reporting cyber incidents and involving the private sector and civil society in the State Council for Cyber Security.</p> <p>In accordance with the National Cyber Security Strategy 2023-2027, Kosovo should increase participation in global cybersecurity forums and broaden collaboration across sectors to establish a stronger international cybersecurity presence.</p>
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58 Kosovo Cyber Security Law, The European Commission at <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=70933>

59 Ibid.

60 Kosovo National Cyber Security Strategy 2023-2027 at <https://shorturl.at/2t0NY>

2. DETAILED DATA ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GREEN AGENDA ACTION PLAN: DECARBONIZATION

Activity	Time limit	Responsible Institution	Progress (policies, activities)	Next Steps
1. Complying with EU Climate Law with the vision of achieving climate neutrality by 2050	2025	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure and Ministry of Economy.	<p>This point of the Action Plan calls for alignment with EU Climate Law, which means achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Climate neutrality means balancing greenhouse gas emissions with their removal to avoid rising global warming.</p> <p>In December 2023, the Kosovo Assembly adopted the Law on Climate Change. This law is partially in accordance with EU regulations and the Directive on Energy and Climate Governance, which address greenhouse gas emissions monitoring and trading.⁶¹</p> <p>This Law will give rise to approximately nine by-laws, which will include regulations and administrative instructions.⁶²</p> <p>After the approval of this Law, the Division for Climate Change is expected to be created within the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure. Furthermore, the Ministry intends to increase its staff from one person to four. This step aims to increase the ministry's effectiveness in this particular area.⁶³</p> <p>By Decision of Council of Ministers no. 2022/02/MC-EnC, Kosovo has set targets for 2030: renewables at 32% of gross final energy consumption; energy efficiency at 2.7 Mtoe for primary consumption and 1.8 Mtoe for final consumption; and GHG at -16.3% or 8.95 MtCO₂eq versus 2016.</p> <p>Kosovo has adopted the Law on the Promotion of the Use of Renewable Energy Resources, which sets a mandatory target for the percentage of energy from these sources by 2030, defines the responsibilities and administrative procedures for renewable energy, regulates the construction of new capacity and support mechanisms, provides for a support scheme for electricity and heating/cooling from renewable sources, establishes access to the grid and promotes the production and fusion of electricity from these sources, and sets the criteria of sustainability and emission savings from biofuels, biofluids, and biomass.</p>	<p>Kosovo should pass the secondary legislation necessary to carry out the Law on Climate Change and the Law on the Promotion of the Use of Renewable Energy Resources. These acts should include specific measures to reduce emissions and increase renewable energy production by 2030.</p>

⁶¹ See Law at <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=85112>

⁶² KDI Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure, 24 November 2023, Prishtina.

⁶³ Ibid.

Setting Energy and Climate Goals by 2030	2022	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, and Ministry of Economy.	<p>In the long term, Kosovo is committed to putting in place a carbon price system and aligning it with EU ETS price levels by 2030, due to the signing of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.⁶⁴</p> <p>Some of the specific objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution and consumption of energy from renewable sources is aimed at being 32% by 2030. <p>Kosovo's target in this aspect is the lowest compared to the targets set by the other regional countries.⁶⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The maximum share of primary energy consumption (primary energy in Kosovo is derived from coal) by 2030 is aimed to be 2.70 Mto (million tonnes of oil equivalent).⁶⁶ - Maximum share of final energy consumption in 2030 is intended to be 1.80 Mto (million tonnes of oil equivalent). - Kosovo's target for Greenhouse Gas Emissions compared to 2016 levels and absolute emissions in 2030 is aimed to be reduced by 16.3%. This target is the lowest compared to the other countries in the region. In addition, the aim is to emit only 8.95 MtCO₂ (million metric tons) of greenhouse gases in 2030, which is higher compared, for example, to Montenegro and Macedonia, which plan to emit only around 2 MtCO₂.⁶⁷ 	
3. Developing and implementing integrated energy and climate plans.	2022	Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure	<p>Following the adoption of the Governance Regulation by the Energy Community Ministerial Council in 2021, Kosovo and other Western Balkan countries were legally required to develop and adopt Integrated National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). NECPs are an important instrument for steering the energy transition, defining the economy's energy and climate goals, and policies and measures to attain them. According to the Regulation, the draft NECPs are to be submitted for the Energy Community Secretariat's review and opinion by June 2023 and adopted by June 2024.⁶⁸</p> <p>Kosovo has yet to complete the National Energy and Climate Plan, which began drafting in 2018. It was formally submitted for feedback to the Energy Community Secretariat on July 12, 2023. On December 29, 2023, the SKE sent feedback on the draft PKEK, and from March 25-27, 2024 a workshop was held for their review. GIZ and GET experts have elaborated this feedback in the draft document. The draft will be put up for public discussion in May 2024, and by the end of June 2024, the Kosovo government is anticipated to approve it.⁶⁹</p>	<p>Kosovo should expedite the drafting of the National Energy and Climate Plan, which will include concrete measures to meet clean energy and emission reduction targets in accordance with EU guidelines.</p>

64 See Kosovo Energy Strategy, p. 16, at <https://shorturl.at/RR96y>

65 UNDP official website at <https://climatepromise.undp.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/kosovo>

66 Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Green Agenda Implementation Report 2022, p. 10 at <https://shorturl.at/9swvD>

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., p. 12.

69 KDI interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response during May-June 2024.

4. Preparation and implementation of climate change adaptation strategies	2028	Government with the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure.	A Climate Adaptation Strategy has not been adopted yet in Kosovo. The drafting work is expected to start in the second half of 2024. ⁷⁰ Nonetheless, established documents govern climate change-related issues. The Kosovo Government adopted the Climate Change Strategy 2019-2028 and the Action Plan 2019-2021 in February 2019 , which should have been updated by now. ⁷¹	Kosovo should start working on the drafting of a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The Climate Change Strategy Action Plan should also be updated.
Harmonization with the EU System for Trading and/or Introducing Instruments others of the carbon price.	2024	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure	Carbon-pricing instruments have not yet been introduced in the Western Balkan region , with the exception of Montenegro. ⁷² Therefore, Kosovo has yet to establish a framework for carbon pricing mechanisms. However, the development of these carbon pricing schemes is currently underway, supported by the EU Energy Community. ⁷³ Carbon pricing is critical for climate action and economic development in the Western Balkans. It can reduce emissions and attract clean investments. A coordinated regional approach and careful implementation are important to avoid trade disadvantages and ensure effective climate policies. ⁷⁴	Kosovo must decide whether to align its carbon price with the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) or to implement its own carbon pricing policies. The next steps should be to finalize the carbon pricing decision, start policy discussions, and create a detailed implementation plan that focuses on monitoring and managing the new system.
6. Increase opportunities for the creation of natural solutions for the mitigation and adaptation of climate change	2025	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure and Ministry of Economy	The implementation of approaches that integrate ecosystems and nature more broadly into climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures is still insufficient and fragmented. Western Balkan economies. ⁷⁵ Kosovo is still in the early stages of addressing environmental and climate challenges, with limited progress made on waste management laws and strategies, air and water quality, and nature protection. To improve, Kosovo should incorporate nature-based solutions such as increasing waste recycling, planting trees to improve air quality, water management, protecting natural habitats, and implementing green infrastructure to combat industrial pollution. These solutions can support Kosovo's climate strategy by reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change. ⁷⁶ In this regard, the International Union for Conservation of Nature is implementing the ADAPT project in all of the region's countries. This project uses nature-based solutions to increase resilience to climate change in the Western Balkans. The goal is to raise awareness, incorporate these solutions into policies, and apply them to disaster risk management. The project, which runs from November 2019 to October 2024 and has a €2.48 million budget, implements regional and local partnerships. ⁷⁷	Kosovo should prioritize integrating nature-based solutions into climate policies, such as reforestation and better waste management. Strengthening environmental laws, raising awareness, and investing in monitoring systems are essential. Collaboration with regional partners and the development of a strategic action plan will aid in effective implementation.

70 KDI Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure, 24 November 2023, Prishtina.

71 Republic of Kosovo, "Climate Change Strategy 2019- 2028 and Action Plan 2019-2021" at <https://shorturl.at/r8uY9>

72 Regional Cooperation Council, Green Agenda Implementation Report 2022, p. 13.

73 KDI Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure, 24 November 2023, Prishtina.

74 See World Bank publication "State Climate and Development Report 2024", June 2024 at <https://shorturl.at/4APp1>

75 Regional Cooperation Council, Green Agenda Implementation Report 2022, p. 14.

76 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 112–117.

77 See more about the ADAPT project at <https://shorturl.at/VNPak>

<p>7. Ensuring the participation of WB economies in the European Climate Pact or exploring the establishment of similar mechanisms.</p>	<p>2022</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>The European Climate Pact is a European Union initiative that encourages citizens, communities, and organizations to take concrete steps to combat climate change. It raises awareness, disseminates information, and encourages widespread participation in order to achieve the European Green Deal goals.</p>	<p>Kosovo should actively participate in the European Climate Pact by aligning its environmental policies with those of the EU and strengthening its implementation capabilities. If full participation is not possible, Kosovo should consider establishing similar national and regional mechanisms to raise public awareness, involve citizens and various sectors in climate change solutions, and meet the goals of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.</p>
<p>Review and revise, where necessary, all relevant regulations to support the gradual decarbonization of the energy sector.</p>		<p>Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Although decarbonization is mentioned in the newly adopted Energy Strategy in March 2023, the Kosovo government has yet to draft a Decarbonization Strategy, which is also mentioned as a deficiency in the EC Country Report for Kosovo 2023.⁷⁸</p> <p>Kosovo's efforts to reform its electricity market face concerns about ensuring a secure electricity supply. Despite some improvement in market liquidity and competition, Kosovo's environmental performance has deteriorated. The Energy Community Secretariat has identified ongoing infringement cases due to a lack of environmental impact assessment legislation and violations of emission limits in large combustion plants.⁷⁹</p> <p>Regarding the legislation revision, the Draft Law on Energy and the Draft Law on Electricity, have passed the process of preliminary, public discussion and feedback by the Energy Community Secretariat. The draft Law on Energy also includes balancing policies in cases of energy poverty.</p> <p>The Draft Law on Energy Regulator and the Draft Law on Energy Efficiency are also currently being prepared.</p>	<p>Kosovo should speed up the review and improvement of its legislation to support the energy sector's decarbonization. This includes the completion and adoption of a Decarbonization Strategy. Furthermore, it should complete the adoption of draft laws in the process, such as those pertaining to energy, electricity, energy regulation, and energy efficiency.</p>
<p>9. Preparation of an assessment of the socioeconomic impact of decarbonization at the individual and regional levels.</p>		<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, and Ministry of Economy</p>	<p>Kosovo adopted the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment in December 2022.</p> <p>While, similar to other Western Balkans countries, has begun to assess the socioeconomic impact of decarbonization at the economy level through a project supported by the International Monetary Fund. The goal is to ultimately develop an action plan that will include recommendations for the required policy reforms to address this issue.⁸⁰</p>	<p>Kosovo should conduct a thorough assessment of the socioeconomic impact of decarbonization, examining the effects at both the national and regional levels. This assessment will help create appropriate strategies to minimize negative impacts and maximize benefits from the transition to a low-carbon economy.</p>

78 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 116.

79 Regional Cooperation Council, Green Agenda Implementation Report, p. 20.

80 KDI Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure, 24 November 2023, Prishtina.

<p>Prioritizing and improving energy efficiency across all sectors.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ministry of Economy</p>	<p>Kosovo has made some progress, most notably with the adoption of an ambitious new Energy Strategy in March 2023, the launch of the first solar auction in May 2023, and additional investments in the energy efficiency of public and residential buildings in accordance with the Energy Support Package Action Plan.⁸¹ This auction ended in 2024, and the winning company has been determined.⁸²</p> <p>In May 2024, the Law on Building Energy Performance was also adopted.</p> <p>In addition, Kosovo is expected to hold its first wind power auction with a capacity of 150 MW in 2024.⁸³</p> <p>Within the framework of the Energy Strategy, the increase in energy efficiency is intended to limit energy consumption to 1877 ktoe by 2031. Currently, efficiency measures are being implemented in 12 public facilities, with projects ending in June and December 2024 and a total investment of more than 2 million euros.⁸⁴</p>	<p>Kosovo should adopt new draft laws, such as the Draft Law on Energy Efficiency, the Draft Law on Energy, and the Draft Law on Electricity, to ensure energy efficiency across all industries.</p> <p>Furthermore, Kosovo needs to mobilize more funding and strengthen the capacities of the institutions to implement and monitor the savings. The draft law on energy efficiency and energy performance of buildings must be aligned with the new directives mandated by the Energy Community Treaty.</p> <p>According to the applicable law, Kosovo must implement building energy performance certification as well as adopt the Building Renovation Strategy and Plan for Nearly Zero Energy Buildings.</p>
<p>11. Transposition and full enforcement of the Energy Performance Directive of Buildings</p>	<p>2023</p>	<p>Ministry of Economy</p>	<p>As previously stated, Kosovo adopted the Building Energy Performance Law in May 2024. This law is partially complies with Directive 2010/31/EU on the Energy Performance of Buildings and Directive (EU) 2018/844 amending Directive 2010/31/EU on the Energy Performance of Buildings.⁸⁵</p> <p>On the other hand, the Law on Energy Efficiency, adopted in 2018, must be amended to comply with the new EU directives mandated by the Energy Community Treaty.⁸⁶</p> <p>Activities to strengthen expertise and tools for certification of buildings are ongoing, including on the new registry and certification software.⁸⁷ However, Building Renovation Strategy and the Plan for nearly zero energy buildings have yet to be adopted.⁸⁸</p>	<p>Kosovo must update its 2018 Energy Efficiency Act to meet EU standards, finalize its strategy for renovating nearly zero-energy buildings and building plans, and complete the new building registry and certification software. Improved implementation and monitoring are also required to ensure compliance with energy performance standards.</p>
<p>12. Supporting programs for renovation of private and public buildings and ensuring adequate funds</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ministry of Economy</p>	<p>During 2024, Kosovo has continued with renovation projects for residential and public buildings with support from the government and donors. From January to May, the Energy Efficiency Fund completed audits and projects for 35 public buildings and paid for 1,110 residential homes. Meanwhile, the audit of six high-rise buildings is ongoing. The investment aims to reduce energy use by up to 70%.</p> <p>35 million euros has been invested in the residential and commercial sectors for efficient equipment and renewable energy systems. Public calls for support in photovoltaic systems are open until November 2024. Small and medium-sized enterprises have received 5 million euros for efficient heating and renewable energy.⁸⁹</p>	<p>Kosovo should continue with programs for renovation of private and public buildings. In this regard, it is necessary to secure sufficient funding and to guarantee the sustainability of these programs.</p>

81 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 110.

82 See more at <https://shorturl.at/GeWbE>

83 Balkan Green Energy, official website at, <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/kosovo-to-hold-its-first-wind-power-auction-in-2024/>.

84 KDI Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response during May-June 2024.

85 See Law, Article 1 at <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=92131>

86 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 113

87 Regional Cooperation Council, Green Agenda Implementation Report, pg.

88 Ibid.

89 KDI Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response during May-June 2024.

<p>13. Increasing the use of renewable energy sources and establishing the necessary investment conditions</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ministry of Economy</p>	<p>Kosovo came close to meeting its 2020 target for renewable energy in gross final energy consumption. New targets have been adopted by the Ministerial Council of the Energy Community in December 2022.⁹⁰</p> <p>Kosovo has made significant progress toward increasing renewable energy capacity. The first solar photovoltaic auction with a capacity of 100 MW took place in May 2023, with the “Orllati” consortium winning at 48.88€/MWh.</p> <p>After this auction, another auction for wind power with a capacity of 150 MW is planned, for which an agreement has been signed with the International Finance Corporation (IFC).</p> <p>Other projects under development include a 100 MW solar power plant in KEK and a 50 MW solar thermal power supply project, which are in the process of being evaluated and applied for funding.</p> <p>A project for the construction of a 170 MW battery energy storage system is also underway, with a co-financing agreement signed on 13 March 2024 and the establishment of the Energy Storage Corporation.⁹¹</p>	<p>Kosovo should implement the newly adopted law on promoting the use of renewable energy sources.</p> <p>Furthermore, in order to meet the plan’s requirements for increasing the use of renewable energy and creating the necessary conditions for investment, Kosovo should speed up the implementation of existing projects, provide additional financing and support for new projects, invest in energy infrastructure modernization, strengthen renewable energy policies and regulations, and promote broad participation and education in this sector.</p>
<p>14. Reduction and gradual elimination of coal subsidies, in compliance with state aid regulations.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Kosovo’s electricity generation is heavily reliant on coal-fired plants. More than 90% of electricity is generated by two outdated, unreliable, and highly polluting lignite power plants that the government intends to refurbish.⁹²</p> <p>The Energy Strategy aims to gradually replace coal by 2050 with three strategic targets. a) Gradually lowering the carbon price, b) incorporating renewable energy into the electricity generation mix, and c) encouraging the use of renewable energy for heating.⁹³</p> <p>Kosovo introduced subsidies for investments in more efficient and less polluting sources for the first time in 2022, which was viewed as a significant step forward.⁹⁴ Since 2012, Kosovo has not provided subsidies for coal. While, the use of coal is prohibited only in schools and household institutions.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, coal continues to be utilized for heating purposes.</p>	<p>Kosovo should accelerate the gradual phase-out of coal, setting concrete deadlines by 2050. This includes investments in the renewal of power plants and the increase of renewable energy sources.</p>
<p>15. Guaranteeing participation in the Initiative to Support Coal Regions in Transition in the Western Balkans</p>		<p>Ministry of Economy</p>	<p>The “Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition in the Western Balkans and Ukraine” (2020-2023) aimed to help coal-dependent regions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Ukraine make the transition to a carbon-neutral economy. Managed by the European Commission and partners, it has provided regional dialogue, capacity building, and technical assistance. The initiative supported the European Green Deal’s climate neutrality goals, with a new effort planned for 2024 to continue these actions in the Western Balkans.⁹⁶</p>	

90 Regional Cooperation Council, Action Plan Implementation Report on Green Agenda 2022, pg.
91 KDI Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and written response during May-June 2024.
92 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, pg. 68
93 Energy Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo, pg. 8.
94 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 115
95 KDI Interview with representatives of Ministry of Economy, 27 November 2023, Prishtina.
96 See more at, <https://shorturl.at/xH1jj>

<p>16. Develop programmes to address the problem of energy poverty and financing schemes for household reconstruction and the provision of the basic standards of living</p>	<p>Ministry of Economy</p>	<p>Energy poverty rates in the Western Balkans are among the highest in Europe. Energy poverty occurs when a household's energy consumption is reduced to such an extent that it has a negative impact on the inhabitants' health and well-being.</p> <p>According to EUROSTAT, the proportion of households in the Energy Community that are unable to keep their homes adequately warm is significantly higher than the EU average, with the highest levels in Kosovo, Albania, and North Macedonia, followed by Montenegro and Serbia.⁹⁷</p> <p>According to a GIZ publication from 2023, energy poverty in Kosovo is a major issue affecting approximately 40% of households, particularly those with low incomes, such as Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities. Energy-poor households spend a large chunk of their income on energy, and often can't afford to pay bills or heat their homes during the winter. While current laws include several measures to protect vulnerable consumers, they are insufficient to address rising energy costs while also improving citizens' living standards and health.⁹⁸</p> <p>All WB economies, including Kosovo, have already implemented some short-term measures to alleviate energy poverty.⁹⁹ While effective in the short term, they prove inadequate for long-term alleviation of energy poverty.</p> <p>Top of Form</p> <p>Furthermore, the Tirana Declaration resulted in the EU's new Energy Support Package, which included grants totaling EUR 1 billion.¹⁰⁰ Under this package and via IPA III the EU provided 500 million Euro in grants for immediate support towards vulnerable families.¹⁰¹</p> <p>Starting in 2022, Kosovo initiated projects in two phases to finance the subsidization of energy-efficient equipment for households. This initiative aims to directly reduce energy demand by providing a 40% subsidy on these purchases.¹⁰²</p> <p>In January 2024, the Ministry of Finance announced that it has begun subsidizing electricity for vulnerable households supported by the EU, benefiting 40,620 households.¹⁰³</p>	<p>Kosovo should accelerate the implementation of the energy poverty program and create financial incentives for low-income households to renovate their homes. Subsidies for energy equipment should be expanded, while awareness of energy efficiency should be strengthened. Cooperation with international partners should be intensified to support these measures and raise living standards.</p>
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97 Regional Cooperation Council, Green Agenda for the WB Action Plan Implementation Report 2022, pg.32.

98 See more at, <https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2023-en-factsheet-energy-poverty.pdf>

99 Ibid. pg. 32.

100 EU-Western Balkans summit, Tirana Declaration, 6 December 2022.

101 Regional Cooperation Council, Action Plan Implementation Report on Green Agenda 2022, pg.

102 Ministry of Economy, official website at, <https://me.rks.gov.net/blog/zgjatet-afati-i-aplikimit-per-fazen-1-per-subvencionim-te-eficiences-se-energjiise/>

103 See more at the Ministry of Finance, official Facebook page at <https://shorturl.at/jzegb>

<p>17. Supporting the development of smart infrastructure, promoting incentives of innovative technologies (such as ticketless transport, artificial intelligence, multimodal passenger tickets, mobility as a service, border crossing applications of the border, 5G corridors, etc.)</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, and Ministry of Economy</p>	<p>The Transport Community Treaty Secretariat has provided technical assistance regarding the deployment of e-freight in the Western Balkans, aiming to enable an interoperable electronic freight information exchange system in the region, reduce the administrative burden for logistics operators, and facilitate multimodal transport.¹⁰⁴</p> <p>All Western Balkan economies, including Kosovo, developed the legislative framework for the deployment of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).¹⁰⁵</p> <p>The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is improving Pristina's urban transport system by providing a senior loan of up to €10 million under the Green Cities framework. The project will introduce electric bus technology to Kosovo for the first time, with the six electric buses.¹⁰⁶</p> <p>Kosovo in April 2023 has ensured 100% access to the Internet in its territory, scoring the highest rate of coverage in Europe.¹⁰⁷</p> <p>On the regional level, Kosovo and Albania have signed a memorandum to establish a 5G digital corridor. This network promises significantly faster data transmission over the Internet, approximately 100 times faster than current 4G technology. This memorandum aligns with the agreement reached in Washington.¹⁰⁸</p> <p>Another step toward digitalizing urban traffic in the capital was taken in February 2024, when Internet connections were installed on urban traffic buses, allowing passengers to use Internet services for free. The cost of this service is 2,500 euros per month, while the goal is to make public transport as attractive as possible.¹⁰⁹</p> <p>In May 2024, the Ministry of Economy and the Municipality of Gjilan signed a Memorandum of Understanding to implement the Project "Piloting the Smart City (Neutral Host) Concept" with a 550,000.00 euros co-financing. This project will implement new technologies, make efficient use of electricity, create a digital system for traffic and waste management, and provide digital municipal services.¹¹⁰</p>	<p>Kosovo should prioritize expanding and integrating advanced transportation technologies such as paperless ticketing, artificial intelligence for traffic management, and the development of additional 5G corridors.</p> <p>Strengthening collaboration with international partners and providing additional funding are critical for sustaining and expanding these initiatives.</p>
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104 Regional Cooperation Council, Action Plan Implementation Report on Green Agenda 2022, pg.37.

105 Ibid.

106 European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, official website at <https://shorturl.at/VPa7y>

107 KDI Interview with representatives of Ministry of Economy, 27 November 2023, Prishtina.

108 Albania-Kosovo agreement for 5G corridor, <https://shorturl.at/udr0C>.

109 Urban traffic, official website at <https://trafikurban-pr.com/2022/wi-fi-fi-free/>

110 See the news on the official website of the Ministry of Economy, at <https://shorturl.at/LhVNS>

<p>18. Implement the Regional Action Plan for Rail Reform</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>According to the European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, Kosovo's road and rail infrastructure progressed slowly in 2022. The government asked for loans for the Peace Highway, but negotiations are ongoing. Railway work on Line 10 has been slow due to signalling and telecom tender delays. Kosovo and Albania are planning a feasibility study for a railway connecting Durres and Pristina. As the rail market has opened, the challenges remain consistent with EU standards. The transportation system continues to have issues with safety, maintenance, and regulatory capacity.¹¹¹</p> <p>The government has included two draft laws in the Legislative Plan 2024: one on railways and another on railway safety. However, none have yet been sent to the Assembly for approval.¹¹²</p> <p>Kosovo has prepared a multi-year rail maintenance contract and submitted it to the relevant Transport Community authorities for approval.¹¹³</p> <p>Negotiations between Kosovo and North Macedonia to establish one-stop control over road and rail transport are progressing well, though the agreements have yet to be defined. Joint rail Border Crossing Points (BCP) Hani i Elezit are yet to start operating as functional one BCP stops.¹¹⁴ In November 2023, two renovated tunnels became operational on the railway line from the North Macedonia-Kosovo border to City of Fushë Kosova, as part of the rehabilitation of Line 10 of the Railway.¹¹⁵</p>	<p>Kosovo must first advance draft laws on railways and railway safety, which are part of the 2024 Legislative Plan, but have not yet been submitted to the Assembly for approval.</p> <p>Furthermore, the government should focus on finalizing loan negotiations for the Peace Highway and accelerating Railway 10 projects, as well as addressing signaling and telecom tender delays.</p> <p>Furthermore, the next critical steps include improving infrastructure maintenance, strengthening regulatory capacities, conducting a feasibility study for the Durres-Pristina railway with Albania, and operationalizing the joint railway station with North Macedonia.</p>
<p>19. Designation of corridors for railway transport and internal waterways</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>The Proposal for Revision of Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Regulation which includes a Rail Freight Corridor for the Western Balkans is under the revision by the European Commission.</p> <p>Once adopted, the new RFC will become an essential tool for coordinated cooperation to improve international freight traffic.¹¹⁶ As a component of the Rail Corridor Initiative, Kosovo and other Western Balkan nations will participate in the Rail Freight Corridors (RFCs), a significant European Commission initiative aimed at revitalizing rail freight transport in Europe.</p> <p>Kosovo, Bosnia Herzegovina, and North Macedonia, on the other hand, are landlocked economies that have not prioritized the regulation of maritime legislation and are making slow progress.¹¹⁷</p>	<p>Top of Form</p> <p>Kosovo should establish railway and inland waterway corridors by connecting with sea-accessible neighboring countries, improving regional connectivity, developing logistics centers, and investing in transportation infrastructure.</p>

111 See European Commission Report for Kosovo, pg. 68.

112 See the Kosovo Government Legislative Plan at, <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Programi-Legjislativ-per-vitin-2024-.pdf>

113 Regional Cooperation Council, Action Plan Implementation Report on Green Agenda 2022, pg.37.

114 Transport Community, Action Plan Progress Report 2022, pg.12.

115 Government official website, Tunnels 6 and 7 of the railway line Hani i Elezit – Fushë Kosovë are inaugurated at <https://shorturl.at/QHAY7>

116 Regional Cooperation Council, Action Plan Implementation Report on Green Agenda 2022, pg.38.

117 Ibid. pg. 38.

<p>20. Defining an overall strategy to shift traffic off the road in more environmentally friendly modes.</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>A Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for the Western Balkans was prepared by the Transport Community Secretariat and adopted in July 2021. The purpose of this document is to present the EU’s Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and to modify goals, significant moments, and actions of the EU to the realities in the Western Balkan region.¹¹⁸</p> <p>In May 2023, Kosovo has adopted the “Multimodal Transport Strategy 2023-2030”. It includes efforts to promote rail and water transport as more environmentally friendly and safe alternatives to freight and passenger transportation. This goal helps reduce pollution and road load, contributing to environmental protection and improving air quality.¹¹⁹</p>	<p>Kosovo should prioritize the implementation of the Multimodal Transport Strategy, including infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>Monitoring the strategy’s progress and impact is essential, with adjustments made based on results. Engaging stakeholders and promoting public awareness of the benefits of greener transport options will support and encourage wider adoption.</p>
<p>21. Identifying the EU technical standards and ensuring implementation and digitalisation of all transport modes.</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>The action plan requires Kosovo and other regional countries to adopt EU technical standards for all modes of transportation, as well as to incorporate digital technologies to improve operations and service delivery.</p> <p>Kosovo is in the early stages of developing digital transport systems. Efforts are being made to incorporate digital technologies into transportation infrastructure, but progress is slow. The focus is on improving digital ticketing, real-time tracking, and management systems. However, the challenges remain in the full implementation and standardization of these technologies in all modes of transport.</p> <p>The Multimodal Transport Strategy for Kosovo 2023-2030 focuses on developing a smart and digital transport system. This goal is to integrate digital technologies into transportation infrastructure to improve efficiency, safety, and overall service quality. It reflects Kosovo’s commitment to modernizing its transportation sector with digital solutions.¹²⁰</p>	<p>Kosovo should begin implementing the digital technologies outlined in the Multimodal Transportation Strategy. This includes prioritizing and improving digital infrastructure such as real-time tracking and digital ticketing. To ensure that these technologies are used effectively, relevant personnel must be trained.</p> <p>Furthermore, Kosovo should track the progress of its digitalization efforts, assess their impact, and make changes as needed to address any challenges that arise.</p>
<p>22. Implement the Regional Transportation Improvement Action Plan.</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>The Regional Transport Facilitation Action Plan aims to improve cross-border transport efficiency by addressing customs, infrastructure, and regulatory issues, thereby increasing connectivity and lowering logistical barriers.</p>	

118 EU Transport Community Report 2021, Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy in the Western Balkans, pg.

119 Multimodal Transport Strategy 2023-2030 at, <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/STRATEGJIA-E-TRANSPORTIT-MULTIMODAL-2030.pdf>

120 Ibid. pg. 4.

<p>23. Implementation of the Road Safety Action Plan.</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Implementation of the Regional Road Safety Action Plan includes the implementation of strategies and measures aimed at improving road safety in a region. This includes activities like improving road infrastructure, enforcing traffic rules, running safety campaigns, and improving emergency response systems. The goal is to reduce traffic accidents, injuries, and fatalities by addressing key contributors to road safety risks.</p> <p>The “Multimodal Transport Strategy 2023-2030,” adopted by Kosovo, includes goals directly related to improving road safety.¹²¹</p> <p>The government has approved the decision to establish the Road Traffic Safety Council (RTSC)¹²², which will bear primary responsibility for achieving the objectives set by government policies.</p> <p>Despite this, in practice, Kosovo faces many fatalities in traffic accidents.¹²³</p> <p>Kosovo has not established the Agency for Road Safety, which includes the development of the national system for the continuous collection of road accident data.¹²⁴</p>	<p>To implement the Regional Road Safety Action Plan, Kosovo must first assess its goals and measures. Subsequently, develop a strategy to implement these measures at the national level, focusing on improving road infrastructure, enforcing traffic laws, and developing safety campaigns.</p> <p>Coordination with regional partners is critical for harmonizing efforts and sharing best practices. Finally, Kosovo should monitor and assess the effectiveness of the measures, and adjust the strategies as necessary.</p>
<p>24. Implementation of the Road Traffic Action Plan</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>In February 2024, the Kosovo Assembly adopted the Law on Road Traffic Rules. The new law aims to improve road safety through stricter regulations, updated vehicle and driver standards, and increased use of technology for traffic management.¹²⁵</p> <p>For the first time, Kosovo’s state budget for 2022-2024 includes funding for the Road Asset Management System (SMAR).¹²⁶</p> <p>Kosovo is working on finalizing the Administrative Instruction for the Intelligent Transport System Directive.¹²⁷</p> <p>Kosovo has yet to implement the recommendations outlined in the Technical Assistance for Connectivity in the Western Balkans (CONNECTA) project report, which is aimed at improving the road network’s quality.¹²⁸</p> <p>The draft bylaw on aligning the Directive 2008/69/EC on road infrastructure safety management and the bylaw on periodic technical inspections on roads, if not finalized yet. Also, a system/model for increasing the capacity of road safety inspectors and auditors has yet to be developed.¹²⁹</p>	<p>Kosovo should finalize bylaws to align with EU road safety directives, implement the Connect project’s recommendations to improve road quality, and expand the capacity of road safety inspectors. Additionally, it should monitor the implementation of the new road traffic law.</p>

121 Kosovo Multimodal Transport Strategy 2030, pg. 5.

122 Kosovo Government, Decisions from Meeting 198, pg. 12.

123 See Pledge of Justice n], <https://shorturl.at/zPKpU>

124 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, pg. 109.

125 See Road Traffic Law at, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=87975>

126 Regional Cooperation Council, Action Plan Implementation Report on Green Agenda 2022, pg.41.

127 Ibid. p. 41.

128 European Commission Report for Kosovo 2023, p. 110.

129 Ibid. p. 109.

<p>25. Developing and implementing climate change resilience plans for Western Balkan economies' transportation networks.</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>None of the Western Balkan countries has not prepared or implemented a targeted climate change adaptation strategy for the transportation sector.¹³⁰</p> <p>So far, Kosovo has only established a working group to draft the National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation, with the goal of incorporating climate resilience plans into the transportation network.¹³¹</p>	<p>Kosovo should begin drafting the National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation as soon as possible, including the transportation component.</p>
<p>26. Promoting the preparation and implementation of Urban Sustainable Movement Plans for the urban areas of the Western Balkans</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure and Municipalities</p>	<p>The Kosovo Strategy for Multimodal Transport 2023-2030 aims to regulate multimodal transport, which includes all modes of transportation as well as urban mobility.¹³²</p> <p>The capital, Prishtina, has drawn up the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, but such a plan is missing in other municipalities.¹³³</p>	<p>Based on the Prishtina Model, other municipalities should develop Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans.</p>
<p>27. Determining solutions for sustainable mobility at the regional level, including plans for the development of alternative fuels.</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Renewable energy is almost nonexistent in the Western Balkans' transportation sector, and none of them has adopted the EU's Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Directive, which establishes minimum requirements for alternative fuel infrastructure. Furthermore, no country has implemented Directive (EU) 2018/2001, which promotes the use of renewable energy.¹³⁴</p> <p>"Urban Traffic," a public transportation company within the Municipality of Prishtina, has signed a 10-million-euro loan agreement with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) for the purchase of six electric buses.¹³⁵</p>	<p>Kosovo should adopt and implement the EU's Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Directive to standardise alternative fuel infrastructure. Furthermore, Kosovo should implement Directive (EU) 2018/2001 to promote the use of renewable energy sources in the transportation sector, with the goal of increasing renewable energy's share and supporting sustainable transport solutions.</p>
<p>27a. Developing a strategy for creating electric vehicle charging stations</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, and Ministry of Economy</p>	<p>In May 2024, the public energy company KESCO announced that it had installed electric vehicle charging stations in all districts of Kosovo as part of a campaign to promote electric vehicles and reduce air pollution. With over 74,000 euros invested in supply infrastructure, KESCO aims to support a cleaner environment and lower costs.¹³⁶</p>	<p>Kosovo should evaluate the effectiveness of electric vehicle charging stations, expand the network, and raise public awareness about the benefits of electric vehicles.</p>
<p>28. Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of infrastructure development for fuel alternatives.</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Overall, regional cooperation in the development of alternative fuel infrastructure has been limited.</p> <p>Overall, Kosovo improved its climate resilience and alternative fuels by 8% in 2020 and 2021 and 0% in 2021 and 2022.¹³⁷</p>	<p>Kosovo should collaborate with neighboring countries and regional bodies, participate in joint projects, align regulations with regional standards, and seek financial and technical assistance to advance the development of alternative fuel infrastructure.</p>

130 Regional Cooperation Council, Action Plan Implementation Report on Green Agenda 2022, p. 42.

131 KDI Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure, 24 November 2023, Prishtina.

132 Kosovo Multimodal Transport Strategy 2023–2030, p. 21.

133 Prishtina Municipality Mobility Plan, at https://prishtinaonline.com/uploads/sump_pristina_final_report_alb.pdf

134 Regional Cooperation Council, Action Plan Implementation Report on Green Agenda 2022, p. 42.

135 See more at <https://shorturl.at/TE2yJ>

136 See more at <https://shorturl.at/whtwA>

137 Regional Cooperation Council, Action Plan Implementation Report on Green Agenda 2022, p. 43.