Kosovo 2026

Information from: Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*

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Executive summary

The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* (OIK*) continues to operate as an independent national human rights institution, playing a central role in promoting and protecting human rights and strengthening the rule of law. Its legal framework remains broadly aligned with the UN Paris Principles and relevant Venice Commission standards, providing a solid basis for institutional independence and the effective exercise of its mandate.

During the reporting period, some progress was noted in engagement with European processes and institutional dialogue. However, systemic challenges persist, particularly the low level of implementation of the Ombudsperson's recommendations and weak parliamentary oversight, including delays in the review of Annual Reports. Structural constraints, especially regarding financial and human resources, continue to affect the implementation of the OIK's* multiple mandates. Broader governance challenges, including delays in institutional functioning and limited legislative activity, have further impacted accountability mechanisms. Civic space remains generally open, although reductions in external funding and limited domestic support continue to pose risks to civil society sustainability.

Kosovo 2026

Information from: Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*

NHRIs' establishment, independence, effectiveness, and resilience

International accreditation status and SCA

recommendations

Due to the specific international standing of Kosovo*, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* (OIK*) is unable to seek accreditation before GANHRI's Sub-Committee on Accreditation, organized under the auspices of UN OHCHR. The Institution is a non-accredited, associate member of ENNHRI. It has worked for the promotion and protection of a wide range of human rights issues in Kosovo*.

Follow-up to international and European actors' recommendations on NHRIs and relevant developments

Follow-up on SCA recommendations

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Follow-up on European actors' recommendations

The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* notes that the institution has made **some progress** towards implementing recommendations from European actors.

European actors, notably the European Commission, through the 2025 Enlargement Report on Kosovo*, have issued findings relevant to the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* and the broader rule of law and human rights framework in the country. The report recognizes the Ombudsperson Institution as an important independent oversight mechanism for the protection of human rights, while reiterating concerns regarding the insufficient follow-up by public authorities to its recommendations and the need to strengthen transparency, accountability, and effective public administration in line with EU standards. In addition, the report highlights shortcomings in the oversight role of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo*, stressing the need for stronger cooperation with the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* and the timely review of its annual reports, in order to ensure more effective parliamentary scrutiny and implementation of recommendations.

Follow-up by national authorities shows some progress. On 15 December 2025, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kosovo* organised its Annual Roundtable in Pristina on *"Progress and Challenges in the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Ombudsperson and the National Audit Office."* The

event brought together representatives of the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*, the National Audit Office of Kosovo*, General Secretaries of ministries, and senior officials from public institutions of Kosovo*. Discussions focused on improving inter-institutional cooperation, strengthening transparency and accountability, and advancing the implementation of recommendations issued by independent oversight institutions.

Further progress is reflected in the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2022–2027, which includes measures aimed at strengthening accountability and oversight within public administration. The strategy foresees monitoring the implementation of the Ombudsperson's recommendations by public institutions, improving institutional responses to these recommendations. These measures contribute to reinforcing the role and impact of the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*.

The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* has continued to support the implementation of findings from EU Enlargement reports by systematically referring to EU standards and rule of law principles in its engagement with public authorities. In this context, the Institution has provided opinions and recommendations on draft legislation and policy initiatives, notably in the areas of justice (including fair trial guarantees and the practical implementation of laws affecting the judiciary and prosecution), public administration and socio-economic rights (including issues related to the Law on Salaries, pension schemes and collective agreements), as well as regulatory and governance frameworks (including energy tariff-setting and recruitment criteria in public institutions). It has also contributed to the alignment of human rights-related legislation and policies with European standards, particularly in the fields of non-discrimination, social protection and the rights of the child and other vulnerable groups.

As part of its 25th anniversary celebrations, the Institution hosted an International High-Level Conference on 2 December 2025, on the topic "The Future of Human Rights Amid Global Transformations: National Challenges and International Obligations." The conference provided a platform to highlight the Ombudsperson Institution's central role in promoting human rights, to exchange best practices with international counterparts, and to emphasize the importance of implementing European recommendations at the national level, particularly regarding transparency, accountability, and effective public administration.

Overall, while systematic implementation of the Ombudsperson's recommendations remains a challenge, these developments indicate gradual but tangible progress in responding to the findings of European actors.

NHRI engagement in EU accession and enlargement-related reforms

EU accession and enlargement-related reforms have indirectly strengthened

the independence and effectiveness of the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* by promoting alignment with EU rule of law and fundamental rights standards, particularly in the context of Chapter 23 and the broader rule of law agenda.

Through the EU integration process, legislative reforms in Kosovo* increasingly incorporate EU directives and international human rights standards. Prior to adoption, draft laws undergo a mandatory alignment process with the EU acquis, including formal assessments of compliance by the competent institutions before approval by the Government and the Assembly. This contributes to a stricter rule of law framework and reinforces the role and relevance of the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*, including improved visibility and follow-up of its recommendations.

Cooperation with international and domestic partners is regulated under Article 36 of the Law no. 05 L-019 on the Ombudsperson, which allows the institution to receive additional donations from local and international donors, provided that such support is transparent, lawful, and does not affect its institutional or financial independence.

Within the EU accession context, the institution is eligible to benefit from EU funding instruments such as IPA, TAIEX, and Twinning projects. In the past, namely in 2019, with EU support, the project “EU Support to the Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo*” contributed to strengthening institutional capacities, improving internal management, increasing public awareness of the Institution’s mandate, and upgrading technical and IT infrastructure. Although a specific IPA III application in 2023 was suspended, in 2025, the Institution continues to benefit from IPA-related support, including expert assistance through projects such as JUST REACT.

In 2025 the institution also participates as a beneficiary in regional initiatives financed by the European Union and implemented by the Council of Europe, including **“**Promoting Equality and Combating Racism and Intolerance in the Western Balkans”, “Combating Discrimination and Hatred**”**, **“**Roma Integration – Phase III**”**, and **“**Human Rights and Sustainable Environment in South-East Europe**”**, while maintaining the possibility to benefit from additional TAIEX and Twinning initiatives.

Regulatory framework and mandates

Changes in the regulatory framework

Since January 2025, there have been no changes to the national regulatory or legal framework governing the mandate, structure, or functioning of the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*. Consequently, no specific advocacy initiatives have been undertaken by the Institution regarding amendments or

reforms to its regulatory framework during this reporting period.

Mandates carried out by the institution

Currently, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* carries out the mandates of the Ombudsperson, National Human Rights Institution, the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), and the Equality Body.

Challenges faced by the NHRI in implementing multiple mandates

The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* continues to face challenges in implementing its multiple mandates, largely reflecting the concerns already raised in 2024.

A key institutional challenge relates to the parliamentary consideration and systematic follow-up of recommendations submitted by the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* through its annual, special, and thematic reports. Due to delays and difficulties in the establishment and full functioning of institutions, this marks the third consecutive year in which the Ombudsperson's Annual Report has been submitted to the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo* but has not been reviewed in a plenary session, as was the established practice in previous years. The absence of parliamentary debate weakens accountability mechanisms and limits effective follow-up on the Institution's findings and recommendations.

Another persistent concern also remains the low level of implementation of the Ombudsperson's recommendations by public authorities, which directly affects the overall impact of the Institution's mandate.

In addition, although the overall budget of the OIK* has not been formally reduced, legislative amendments to the Law on Salaries in the Public Sector concerning the salary scheme for public officials, in force since 2023, have negatively affected the salary coefficients of OIK* staff. This has implications for institutional stability, staff retention, and the institution's capacity to effectively discharge its mandates.

To address these challenges, the OIK* requires stronger parliamentary engagement and systematic follow-up to its reports and recommendations, safeguards ensuring adequate and independent financial and human resources, and reinforced political support for the implementation of its mandate. Support from regional and European actors, including ENNHRI and international monitoring mechanisms, would be particularly valuable in echoing the concerns raised in the OIK's* 2024 Annual Report, encouraging national authorities to ensure proper parliamentary scrutiny, improve implementation rates of recommendations, and safeguard the functional and financial independence of the Institution in line with the UN Paris Principles.

NHRI structural challenges, threats and resilience

Structural challenges in the last year

During 2025, the Ombudsperson Institution continued to face challenges regarding the timely and consistent implementation of its recommendations by certain public authorities, particularly in systemic or inter-institutional cases. The institution addressed this through strengthened monitoring, direct engagement with senior authorities, public reporting, and advocacy for enhanced accountability mechanisms and parliamentary follow-up.

Threats in the last year

During the reporting period, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* did not identify any threats, attacks, or interference affecting its mandate, its leadership, or staff. While there have been occasional public statements from representatives of the political spectrum expressing dissatisfaction with certain positions or findings of the institution, these have not been considered by the OIK* to constitute threats, obstruction, or interference with its mandate.

The nature of the operating environment has not significantly changed over time in this regard, and the institution has not identified a pattern of intimidation or targeted pressure linked to specific sensitive issues. The OIK* continues to exercise its mandate independently and without direct threats to its leadership or staff.

Response to threats seeking to undermine the independence and effectiveness of the NHRI

The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* is protected by legal and institutional safeguards, including constitutional and legal guarantees of independence, fixed-term mandates, operational continuity provisions, and functional immunity for all staff of the institution, ensuring protection from interference or retaliation in the performance of their duties. Transparency and public reporting through annual and ex officio reports reinforce accountability and visibility, reducing the risk of undue influence. The institution also engages actively with national authorities, civil society, and international partners to uphold its mandate and independence.

Regional actors, including ENNHRI, can further strengthen this framework by providing support through public statements, peer solidarity, legal advice, capacity building, monitoring threats, and connecting NHRIs with international human rights mechanisms. Such coordinated action strengthens NHRI independence, credibility, and resilience in the face of challenges.

Actions to strengthen the NHRI's resilience

In order to strengthen its resilience and ensure more effective implementation

of its mandate, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* has identified the need to reform the way in which its Annual Report is treated by the Assembly of Kosovo*, with a view to reinforcing parliamentary oversight and follow-up mechanisms.

Key elements proposed include the amendment of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure to align the treatment of the Ombudsperson's Annual Report with international standards, notably by eliminating the practice of voting to approve or reject the Report after its presentation and discussion in the Assembly. The Annual Report should instead be treated as an independent, informative, analytical, and recommendatory document on the state of human rights in the country, followed by structured and substantive parliamentary debate, including questions and discussion with MPs, rather than political endorsement or rejection.

In addition, there is a need to establish an effective parliamentary oversight mechanism dedicated to monitoring the implementation of the OIK's* recommendations, including by assigning an existing parliamentary committee, such as the Committee on Human Rights, a structured role in ensuring systematic follow-up, regular reporting by relevant institutions and ongoing review of implementation progress. The introduction of clear timelines for parliamentary review, ensuring that the Annual Report is discussed within three months from the day of its submission and treated as a priority in plenary proceedings. Furthermore, the adoption of a formal Assembly Resolution following the debate would help identify priority human rights concerns and set out concrete guidance for state institutions on the implementation of recommendations.

The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* considers that reforming the parliamentary handling of its Annual Report is not merely a procedural matter, but a structural measure towards strengthening democratic accountability, transparency, and the rule of law.

NHRI's recommendations to national and regional authorities

To national authorities:

1. Ensure the functional and financial independence of the NHRI by providing adequate and protected budget allocations and safeguarding staff remuneration and institutional resources from political or legislative interference.
2. Strengthen parliamentary oversight and follow-up mechanisms by ensuring that the Ombudsperson's Annual Report is discussed in plenary within a set timeframe, with structured debate, and that a dedicated committee monitors the implementation of recommendations

by public institutions.

To regional authorities and networks (including ENNHRI):

1. React promptly to threats or obstacles faced by NHRIs by providing support, advocacy, and guidance whenever NHRIs encounter interference, obstruction, or challenges in implementing their mandate, helping to protect their independence and effectiveness in line with international standards.
2. Promote alignment with international standards, facilitate the exchange of comparative good practices among NHRIs, and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure effective parliamentary follow-up to NHRI recommendations.

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Information from: Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*

Human rights defenders and civil society space

Challenges for human rights defenders and restrictions to civil society space

Assessment of the situation of civil society space and HRDs

Institutional role and monitoring of civic space

The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* attaches particular importance to safeguarding and promoting the operational space of civil society organizations (CSOs), recognizing it as a key indicator of the level of democratic development in the country.

Based on individual complaints submitted by representatives of CSOs, and in particular through the Forum for Dialogue with Civil Society (the Forum), in 2025 the Ombudsperson did not identify cases that would indicate state interference with, or unjustified restrictions on, the operational space of CSOs.

Narrowing civic space and funding

With regard to the narrowing of civic space, a significant impact has been the lack of financial resources available to non-government organisations (NGOs). This situation has been influenced by the European Union's restrictive measures and the suspension of certain forms of support to Kosovo*, as well as by the interruption of programs funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

During the annual meeting for the drafting of the 2025/2026 Action Plan of the Forum for Dialogue with Civil Society between the Ombudsperson Institution and civil society, participating organizations expressed serious concern regarding the funding gap, emphasizing the urgent need to strengthen institutional support mechanisms.

In this context, on 9 June 2025, the Ombudsperson Institution and the Forum, which brings together the Ombudsperson Institution and 27 CSOs working in various human rights fields, jointly organized a roundtable discussion with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo*, focusing on the impact of EU funding policies and exploring possibilities for increasing state support, particularly for the provision of professional services by CSOs.

The meeting contributed to strengthening institutional dialogue and enhancing the capacity of civil society to effectively promote and protect human rights in Kosovo*.

Structural challenges for CSOs and HRDs

During 2025, CSOs and HRDs faced significant structural challenges, primarily related to the lack of adequate and sustainable funding as well as explicit barriers to accessing funding, including from foreign sources. The suspension of EU funding allocations due to measures implemented in 2023, combined with reductions in numerous other projects caused by shifts in global donor priorities, directly undermined the operational capacity of CSOs.

Many organizations remain heavily dependent on foreign funding, while domestic funding opportunities are limited and difficult to access, creating a precarious financial environment. This funding instability has affected the continuity of programs, the retention of skilled staff, and the ability of CSOs and HRDs to respond effectively to emerging social and human rights needs. To overcome these challenges, it is essential to strengthen domestic funding mechanisms.

Threats to CSOs and HRDs

While direct physical or verbal attacks on CSOs and HRDs were not systematically reported in 2025, structural and financial pressures have created an indirect environment of threat and vulnerability for these actors. The chronic lack of adequate and sustainable funding, combined with restrictions on access to foreign funding sources, has undermined the operational stability of many organizations. This situation exposes CSOs and HRDs to risks such as program discontinuity, staff turnover, and reduced capacity to respond to emerging human rights challenges. These systemic pressures disproportionately affect smaller organizations, women-led CSOs, and minority or marginalized groups, limiting their visibility, influence, and

ability to advocate safely and effectively. In this sense, the structural constraints themselves function as a form of threat to the independence and sustainability of civil society and human rights work.

National frameworks to support and protect human rights defenders and civil society organisations

Specific laws protecting the rights of HRDs

At the national level, the protection of HRDs in Kosovo* is grounded primarily in the constitutional and legal framework that guarantees freedom of association, civic engagement, and access to justice.

The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo*, in Article 44 (Freedom of Association), guarantees everyone the right to establish an organization without prior permission, to choose whether to be a member of an organization, and to participate in the activities of organizations. This constitutional safeguard provides an essential legal basis for the work of CSOs and HRDs.

Further protections are provided through the Law No. 06/L-043 on Freedom of Association in Non-Governmental Organizations, which regulates the establishment, registration, functioning, suspension, termination, prohibition of activities, and deregistration of non-governmental organizations in Kosovo*. The law is implemented through secondary legislation, including the Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 02/2025 on Registration and Operation of NGOs and the Regulation (MIA) No. 01/2024 on the Establishment, Composition, Mandate, Duties and Responsibilities of the Complaints Commission for NGOs, as well as regulations governing public subsidies for NGOs. These mechanisms provide institutional avenues through which civil society actors and HRDs can exercise and protect their rights.

Specific practical protection mechanisms for civil society and/or HRDs

The Republic of Kosovo* has taken a pioneering step in protecting civic space and public participation. Through the Strategic Plan for Improving Access to Justice 2026–2028, adopted by the Kosovo* Judicial Council, Kosovo* became the first country in Europe to ensure that Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP) are treated as priority cases by the courts. The plan also foresees priority handling of defamation cases and criminal cases linked to the work of CSOs, journalists, media professionals, and media outlets. This measure aims to prevent the abuse of judicial proceedings as a tool for pressuring or silencing HRDs and other public-interest actors.

This step has been publicly welcomed by the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe (CASE), which commended Kosovo's* judiciary for setting an important

precedent in Europe in strengthening protections for freedom of expression and civic engagement.

Also, in practice, HRDs in the Republic of Kosovo* can seek protection and support primarily through the constitutional and legal framework governing freedom of association, through access to the judicial system, and through institutional and civil society mechanisms that support the functioning and protection of NGOs and public interest actors.

Gaps in the protection of HRDs nationally

One of the most significant gaps in the national protection of (HRDs) is the lack of sustainable and predictable funding, which has led to interruptions in program implementation and staff contracts. These interruptions have disproportionately affected women, highlighting a gendered dimension in the protection of HRDs, as female staff are more vulnerable to job insecurity, reduced opportunities for professional development, and limited participation in leadership roles. Beyond financial challenges, these gaps also restrict the ability of HRDs to engage in long-term advocacy, respond effectively to emerging human rights issues, and maintain organizational stability.

Activities of NHRIs to support civil society space and human rights defenders

NHRI initiatives in 2025 to promote civil society space and HRDs

In 2025, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* has taken several initiatives to **promote** the civil society space and HRDs, such as organizing and participating in joint meetings and roundtables, conducting trainings for national authorities and providing capacity-building for HRDs, as well as engaging in planning and dialogue.

Cooperation with CSOs through structural dialogue and coordination mechanisms

The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* regards cooperation with CSOs as a fundamental pillar in the effective implementation of its mandate. In accordance with the Law on the Ombudsperson and in full compliance with the UN Paris Principles, the institution has both the authority and the responsibility to cooperate with CSOs in the protection and promotion of human rights.

Since its establishment, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* has developed sustained partnerships with CSOs, implementing numerous joint initiatives that have contributed to strengthening respect for human rights. These efforts have included conferences, roundtables, training sessions, workshops, advocacy campaigns, and other awareness-raising activities.

In 2017, this cooperation was formalized through the establishment of an NGO Network and the signing of a Joint Declaration of the Ombudsperson and Non-governmental organizations of the Republic of Kosovo* (10 December 2017). In 2021, cooperation was further institutionalized through the creation of the Forum for Dialogue between the Ombudsperson Institution and CSOs, a structured mechanism composed of 27 organizations dedicated to the protection, promotion, and monitoring of human rights, governed by a strategic framework document.

The Forum aims to ensure inclusive and structured dialogue to address systemic human rights challenges and violations. It serves as a platform for consultation, coordination, and the presentation of CSO findings and recommendations. The Forum conducts regular activities, including four annual meetings and a dedicated workshop for the joint drafting of the annual action plan.

Additionally, in the frameworks of strategic dialogue, on 2 April 2025, the Ombudsperson Institution, in cooperation with the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR KS), organized a Regional Conference entitled “Strengthening Partnerships between Ombudsperson Institutions and Civil Society for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights.” The conference brought together representatives of counterpart Ombudsperson institutions from the Western Balkans, civil society organizations, activists, and experts to exchange experiences and promote structured and strategic cooperation in line with the Paris Principles.

On 26 June 2025, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*, in its role as the National Preventive Mechanism against Torture (NPM), organized the International Conference “Mental Health in Places of Detention: The Role of NPMs in Protecting Rights and Ensuring Effective Oversight.” The conference was held to mark 26 June, the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, and to raise public awareness, particularly among responsible authorities, about European standards for the treatment of persons with mental health conditions, the sensitivity required in addressing mental health issues, and the need to ensure dignified treatment. The event brought together representatives from NPMs in the region, national institutions, international organizations, and civil society.

Awareness-Raising and Educational Activities through joint meetings and roundtables

The Ombudsperson organizes joint meetings and thematic roundtables with CSOs to address key human rights issues. For example, in cooperation with the NGO “EcoZ” and “Save the Children Kosova/o,” the Ombudsperson organized activities marking World Environment Day, promoting environmental rights and children’s rights.

On 6 December 2025, in cooperation with the NGO “Sytë kërkojnë dritë” (“Eyes Seek Light”), the Ombudsperson organized a roundtable in Suhareka entitled “Communicating through Art,” marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and focusing on the rights of blind persons.

Additionally, the Ombudsperson organizes joint awareness-raising campaigns with CSOs. For example, a campaign on the rights of communities, which included a series of round tables and meetings. For instance, on 19 February 2025, in cooperation with NGO Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC), a roundtable was held in Peja, where CSOs from this region gathered to discuss the challenges and problems of communities related to human rights. The roundtable aimed to raise awareness and understanding of human rights issues on the ground from the perspectives of affected communities and to facilitate close cooperation between the Ombudsperson’s Institution and CSOs in this region. On 11 April 2025, a roundtable was held in Leposaviq and was also supported by NGO ACDC. On April 15, 2025, the Ombudsperson organized an educational meeting with representatives of various children’s groups advocating for children’s rights, including the Children’s Assembly of Prishtina and Mitrovica, the Respect Our Rights (ROR) group, SOS Children’s Villages in Kosovo*, and HANDIKOS (the Moon group).

On 24 November 2025, a meeting with the Bosniak community was held in Reqan within the framework of the same campaign.

Training for national authorities

The institution regularly delivered two training sessions for judges, prosecutors, and the Kosovo* Police, with the objective of strengthening the protection of human rights standards and enhancing the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation.

Capacity building for CSOs and HRDs

The Ombudsperson provides targeted training on its role, mandate, and responsibilities, thereby strengthening the capacities of CSOs and human rights defenders to effectively engage with national human rights mechanisms and accountability processes.

NHRI actions to protect civil society space and HRDs

Within the framework of the Forum for Dialogue between the Ombudsperson Institution and CSOs, the Forum Dialogue Plan 2025–2026 was drafted at the beginning of 2025. This document serves as a strategic framework guiding joint cooperation in the protection and promotion of human rights. It defines priority themes, planned activities, institutional partners, and the implementation timeline, with the objective of strengthening structured dialogue, addressing systemic challenges, and advocating for more effective human rights policies.

The Forum Dialogue Plan 2025–2026 foresees the organization of periodic Forum meetings, thematic roundtables, the publication of reports, and joint awareness-raising and advocacy activities with public institutions and relevant partners.

Substantively, the Plan encompasses a broad range of priority issues reflecting the current human rights situation in Kosovo*. These include environmental rights, mental health, the rights of youth and children, combating discrimination and bullying, as well as domestic violence and gender equality, with a particular focus on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. It also addresses the rights of persons with disabilities, the LGBTIQ+ community, non-majority communities, media freedom, and labour rights, through discussions, analyses, research, and coordinated advocacy initiatives.

From a functional perspective, the Plan has served as an operational roadmap for coordinating the Forum's activities and ensuring a coherent and strategic approach to joint action.

NHRI's most important needs to advance the protection of HRDs nationally

On 9 June 2025, within the framework of the Forum for Dialogue between the Ombudsperson Institution and CSOs, the Ombudsperson organized a roundtable with government representatives aimed at discussing the impact of changes in international donor funding policies, in particular the reorientation of European Union funds, as well as exploring possibilities for increasing state support to civil society. The discussions focused on the challenges faced by CSOs due to the reduction of funding, the risk of downsizing or discontinuation of essential community services, and the need to institutionalize sustainable public support. This includes the establishment of dedicated budget lines, improvement of the legal framework governing social services, and enhanced inter-institutional cooperation.

The roundtable resulted in several concrete conclusions and commitments, including pledges by institutions to examine the possibility of increasing grants and financial support for CSOs, harmonizing normative and strategic documents related to the financing and contracting of services, and strengthening cooperation between the government and civil society to ensure more effective outcomes. Participants also emphasized the need for CSOs to coordinate common positions to enhance their participation in decision-making processes, to clarify the coordinating role of the Ombudsperson Institution and relevant authorities, to further develop a joint document containing CSO recommendations, and to organize a follow-up roundtable to continue the dialogue and monitor progress.

The Ombudsperson Institution considers it essential to strengthen institutional capacities for monitoring, responding to, and addressing the challenges faced

by HRDs, as well as to establish more effective mechanisms for their meaningful participation in decision-making and public policy development processes.

International organizations and networks, including ENNHRI, can contribute by facilitating the exchange of good practices and European standards on the protection of HRDs, providing capacity-building support, and assisting in the development of monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

NHRI's recommendations to national and regional authorities

To national authorities:

1. Strengthen enforcement and oversight mechanisms regarding legally delegated competencies to CSOs, particularly where NGOs provide essential public services such as shelters and other protection services, ensuring sustainable and predictable funding, clear accountability standards, and institutional support.
2. Guarantee a safe and enabling environment for civil society and HRDs by preventing political interference, undue administrative restrictions, intimidation, or smear campaigns, and by ensuring effective legal protection and prompt institutional responses to threats or violations.

To regional authorities:

1. Increase monitoring, political engagement, and financial support for civic space and HRDs, including stronger follow-up within EU Enlargement and Rule of Law processes, targeted funding for independent civil society, and consistent public response to attempts that undermine media freedom, freedom of association, and human rights advocacy.

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Information from: Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*

Democracy - checks and balances, disinformation, and other topics

Disinformation

Rights and democratic processes significantly impacted by the spread of disinformation

In terms of rights/democratic processes significantly impacted by the spread of disinformation, the NHRI reports that the rights to privacy and to participate in public life, including elections, are the most affected.

Institution reports that although disinformation is present in the country, this issue has been addressed only to a limited extent. The focus has primarily been on related issues such as defamation, insult, and hate speech, rather than on disinformation as a distinct phenomenon. To date, the institution has not received specific complaints explicitly framed as disinformation cases.

Initiatives by the NHRI to address disinformation

On 1 July 2025, the Ombudsperson Institution organized a round-table about media freedom and the safety of journalists, and it discussed the disinformation issue with journalists and editors, as well as with heads of journalists' associations. In general, it was stated that mainstream media are careful with the distribution of information, and it is rather the online media platforms, including social media, that spread disinformation. It is difficult to reach those media for any complaints since there is no ownership data presented.

Follow-up on the recommendations and findings on countering disinformation issued by European actors

Overall assessment of the situation with disinformation

The 2025 Kosovo* Report of the European Commission explicitly addresses the issue of disinformation and the institutional response to it. The Report states that the media environment remained polarised and that the Independent Media Commission failed to act on media violations during the electoral campaign due to a lack of decision-making quorum. It further notes that the information space was subject to electoral disinformation attempts from both internal and external sources, including misinformation campaigns by Russia-affiliated outlets.

According to the Report, while local fact-checking initiatives attempted to debunk false information, their impact was limited due to language constraints and insufficient outreach. It also underlines that Kosovo* institutions, particularly the Central Election Commission, missed key opportunities to proactively counter disinformation.

These findings indicate that, despite the existence of relevant recommendations from the European Union on strengthening institutional resilience, media oversight, and strategic communication in the context of

disinformation, their effective implementation in Kosovo* remains limited. The 2025 Kosovo* Report of the European Commission suggests that institutional responses have been insufficiently proactive and, at times, structurally constrained, pointing to the need for more coordinated, timely, and systematic measures to counter disinformation, particularly during electoral processes.

Counter-disinformation measures that raised human rights concerns

In response to these challenges, certain measures have been undertaken at national level. Kosovo's* regulatory and self-regulatory bodies, namely the Independent Media Commission and the Press Council of Kosovo,* have organised workshops aimed at strengthening professional capacities to address disinformation. These activities, carried out in cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo*, have primarily targeted young journalists and focused on identifying and deconstructing disinformation in the digital environment.

Furthermore, the draft Law on the Independent Media Commission introduces provisions on media education, aiming to promote and establish effective measures and tools to enhance media literacy and raise public awareness, with particular emphasis on the protection of children and juveniles. The draft also seeks to strengthen citizens' ability to use media safely and effectively, develop critical thinking skills, and distinguish between fact and opinion.

At the governmental level, and with the support of the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Kosovo*, the Government of Kosovo* has launched a "Government Communications Manual" intended to improve strategic communication and contribute to efforts to prevent and respond to misinformation and disinformation.

Overall, while these initiatives demonstrate a degree of responsiveness to the concerns and recommendations issued by European actors, further efforts are required to ensure a coherent, sustainable and rights-compliant approach to countering disinformation

Law-making processes

Significant challenges affecting law-making processes

During the reporting period, the Ombudsperson did not identify any activities related to the legislative process. This situation was primarily due to the failure to constitute the Assembly and establish the Government, which effectively stalled law-making processes. As a result, there were no opportunities for meaningful participation in legislative initiatives.

Initiatives taken to address challenges identified in the context of law-making processes

During the reporting period, no new legislative initiatives were undertaken due to the absence of a functioning Assembly and Government in Kosovo*. However, regarding existing laws, the Ombudsperson actively addressed challenges in the law-making process.

On 24 February 2025, the Ombudsperson submitted a request to the Constitutional Court for the assessment of the constitutionality of Articles 77 to 84 of Law No. 08/L-262 on Amending and Supplementing the Laws Containing Special Administrative Procedures, and their harmonization with Law No. 05/L-031 on General Administrative Procedure. The Ombudsperson considered that these provisions created uncertainty in the execution of administrative acts, denying individuals the right for such acts to be enforced through the Law on Enforcement Procedure. Accordingly, the request sought an assessment by the Constitutional Court of whether Articles 77 through 84 of the contested law comply with Articles 7 and 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo*.

Moreover, the Ombudsperson has consistently drawn the attention of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo*, through its annual reports, particular in 2025, to shortcomings in legislative drafting practices. In particular, the institution has recommended that, in the process of amending and supplementing laws, all changes should be consolidated into the basic law and published as a single, unified text. This would enhance legal certainty, accessibility, transparency, and the effective implementation of legislation, in line with the rule of law principles.

Measures taken to follow up on the findings or recommendations by European actors

During the reporting period, the Ombudsperson did not identify any activities related to legislative process. This situation resulted from the failure to constitute the Assembly and to establish the Government.

NHRI’s recommendations to national and regional authorities

Concerning disinformation

To national authorities:

1. Adopt a new law on the Independent Media Commission (IMC), since the last draft law was found not in compliance with the Constitution by the Constitutional Court. The new law would allow the IMC to function properly and deal with third-party complaints, including cases of disinformation.
2. Invest in media and digital literacy programs for all age groups. Also, greater support should be given to independent and professional media

that would encounter disinformation, false and misleading narratives through particular projects.

Concerning law-making processes

To national authorities:

1. The Ombudsperson recommends that, in the legislative process, all amendments and supplements to existing laws be fully incorporated into the text of the basic law and published in the Official Gazette as a consolidated final version in a single document. This would strengthen legal certainty, improve accessibility and clarity of legislation, and ensure greater transparency and effective implementation in line with rule of law standards.

Kosovo 2026

Information from: Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo*

Other challenges to the rule of law and human rights

Structural human rights issues that reflect persistent challenges for the rule of law

In 2025, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* continued to monitor and address persistent structural challenges affecting the rule of law and the protection of human rights. These challenges reflect both gaps in legislation implementation and inconsistencies in administrative practice, which have tangible effects on citizens' rights. The institution focused its attention on issues where systemic deficiencies have a broad impact, including the recognition of pension entitlements and the effective implementation of the Law on Protection from Discrimination.

Pension Rights and Legal Certainty

On 24 November 2025, the NHRI published the Report of Ombudsperson, Ex-officio no. 614/2024 on the recognition of the right to two pensions, based on two different legal grounds (dual pensions)addressing the recognition of the right to receive pensions under two distinct legal frameworks: Law No. 04/L-131 on State-Funded Pension Schemes and Law No. 04/L-054 on the Status and Rights of Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans, Members of the KLA, Sexual Violence Victims of the War, Civilian Victims, and their Families. The report reaffirmed that entitlement to a state-funded pension constitutes a property

right, irrespective of whether the beneficiary also receives another pension or compensation under a different legal basis.

This position is supported by domestic case law, notably Judgment A.nr.280/17 of 4 February 2020, which recognized the right to receive both an age-based contributory pension and a civil war invalidity pension. While formally individual, the ruling has *erga omnes* implications for a broad category of beneficiaries.

Despite this, the Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers continues to reject similar claims based on restrictive interpretations, failing to align administrative practice with judicial rulings. This inconsistency undermines legal certainty and the effective enjoyment of property rights. The resulting differential treatment of identical or comparable cases constitutes a structural violation of equality and non-discrimination, places an unnecessary burden on the judiciary, and persists in the absence of any comprehensive institutional reform to harmonize Kosovo's* pension schemes with human rights standards.

Non-Discrimination and Equality Rights

On 10 December 2025, the NHRI published the Report on the Implementation of the Law on Protection from Discrimination for 2024, which identified persistent institutional weaknesses. Many ministries and municipalities have yet to establish the required mechanisms for protection against discrimination or for reporting on the law's implementation.

Even in institutions where responsible officials have been appointed, there are no clearly defined job descriptions, procedures for reporting, or processes for handling discrimination cases. Broader systemic deficiencies, including the absence of data management registers, insufficient staff training, and failure to implement the NHRI's 2023 recommendations, highlight ongoing weaknesses in institutional responses to discrimination. Consequently, the implementation of the Law on Protection from Discrimination in 2025 remained largely unchanged.

Other persisting challenges or key developments for the rule of law

Rule of law and parliamentary oversight

Despite some progress in strengthening the rule of law, significant challenges remain, particularly regarding the lack of effective parliamentary oversight and accountability. The absence of robust oversight mechanisms weakens accountability and limits institutional responsibility for ensuring that adopted laws are properly enforced. This gap directly affects legal certainty and the practical realization of rights. Enhancing parliamentary supervision remains

essential to ensure that public institutions fulfill their obligations under the law.

Judiciary and access to justice

Within the judiciary, improving efficiency in case handling remains essential, as prolonged judicial proceedings continue to undermine citizens' ability to effectively exercise their rights and weaken trust in justice. Delays in court processes not only affect access to remedies but also challenge the principle of equality before the law.

Systemic challenges were further identified in the justice sector, including judicial inefficiencies, inconsistent safeguards for fair trial rights, overuse of pre-trial detention, and shortcomings in the legal framework governing involuntary psychiatric treatment. These structural issues reflect the need for stronger institutional coordination, legislative harmonization, and full alignment with constitutional and international human rights standards.

The high number of complaints received by the NHRI in 2025, particularly concerning the right to effective remedies, fair trial, and equality before the law, demonstrates that access to justice remains a key challenge. Although the Strategic Plan for Improving Access to Justice (2022–2025) aimed to enhance judicial efficiency, the volume of complaints indicates that tangible improvements have yet to be achieved.

Legislative framework and participation

From a legislative perspective, greater transparency and public participation in the law-making process are necessary, especially through the meaningful involvement of key stakeholders in relevant sectors. Ensuring that laws are accessible, predictable, and implementable is fundamental to safeguarding legality in state action and strengthening democratic governance.

Protection of rights and sectoral concerns

Throughout 2025, the NHRI also identified persistent rule of law concerns related to the protection of children's mental health and the prevention of violence in schools, highlighting gaps in institutional responsibility and implementation. Monitoring efforts have continued in order to strengthen enforcement and ensure effective protection of children's rights.

Concerns were also raised regarding media freedom and journalists' safety. Limited transparency from public institutions, inadequate responses to threats against journalists, and weaknesses in the regulatory framework continue to hinder accountability. The failure of the Law on the Independent Media Commission to pass constitutional review underscores the need for inclusive and transparent legislative reform.

In response, the OIK* hosted a roundtable on 1 July 2025 with journalists, civil

society, and local and international stakeholders to discuss media freedom, legal protections, data privacy, and Kosovo's* negative ranking in the Reporters Without Borders 2025 Index. Participants highlighted the need for inclusive legislative reform, improved handling of threats against journalists, and better working conditions. This activity reflects the Institution's ongoing efforts to strengthen legal safeguards and accountability in the media sector.

NHRI's recommendations to national and regional authorities

Concerning how to address structural human rights issues which reflect persistent challenges to the rule of law

To the national authorities, in particular to the Government of Kosovo:*

1. Ensure the enforceability of final administrative acts and align institutional practices with legal and judicial standards to guarantee equal access to constitutionally and legally guaranteed rights.
2. Strengthen accountability mechanisms across public institutions by establishing clear procedures, reporting lines, and sanctions to ensure officials fulfill human rights obligations and administrative decisions.

To regional authorities, in particular to the European Union:

1. Link support and assistance to measurable progress in implementing the Law on Protection from Discrimination, including the establishment of functional mechanisms for reporting, monitoring, and addressing discrimination cases.

Concerning how to address other persistent challenges or issues linked to key rule of law developments

To the national authorities:

1. The Assembly of Kosovo* to strengthen parliamentary and institutional oversight mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of legislation and enhance accountability across public institutions.
2. The Kosovo* Judicial Council to improve judicial efficiency by reducing procedural delays and ensuring timely access to justice, thereby reinforcing public confidence in the judiciary and safeguarding the right to a fair trial.

To regional authorities, in particular to the European Union:

1. Support reforms that enhance legal certainty, access to justice, and media freedom, linking financial and technical assistance to visible

progress in the implementation of rule of law standards.

References

This list of references covers the whole country report.

* *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.*

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