

Council of Europe Overview of co-operation activities in Kosovo*

*All reference to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Council of Europe

Overview of co-operation activities in Kosovo*

GR-DEM(2025)16
20 January 2026

Document prepared by the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe took note of the Overview of co-operation activities in Kosovo document on 4-5 February 2026 (CM/Del/Dec(2026)1549/2.6)*

INTRODUCTION

This document is an update of the document GR-DEM(2023)8 of which the Ministers' Deputies took note at their 1478th meeting (13 October 2023). It provides an overview of the projects which are proposed as well as of the ones which are currently being implemented by the Council of Europe in Kosovo*.

The Council of Europe co-operation activities in Kosovo* are based on the principle that the Council of Europe and its Secretariat operate in conformity with the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244 (1999) and also on the status-neutral approach of the Organisation. In this context, the Council of Europe maintains contacts with the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). On 12 December 2012, the Committee of Ministers took note of the Secretary General's decision regarding the Council of Europe's activities in Kosovo* implying the direct interaction of its officials with officials from the relevant and competent authorities which is based on the principle of "functional capacity". This principle ensures the Organisation's capacity to work effectively on the ground to promote the transposition and implementation of the Council of Europe's standards.

All proposed and ongoing projects aim to address the needs and strategic priorities of the local authorities. They are relevant to the adherence to the Council of Europe's standards, including those specific standards required via the Copenhagen Criteria, and represent areas of exclusivity or where the contribution of the Council of Europe is of added value. Co-ordination with other activities and actors in situ, in particular with the European Union Office, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), as well as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission in Kosovo and the competent United Nations (UN) agencies, is a guiding principle for all Council of Europe interventions.

On 19 November 2025, the Working Group on co-operation between the Council of Europe and the local institutions held its ninth meeting in Pristina. Participants of the Joint Working Group exchanged perspectives on the state of co-operation and on the proposals for future activities, with a view of preparing the present document.

All projects proposed have been developed based on the needs identified during Council of Europe monitoring and monitoring-like activities carried out under specific arrangements, and as identified during the implementation of programmatic activities. The intervention logic used is based on a programmatic approach whereby all co-operation activities are harmonised and mutually reinforce each other, which is ensured during their implementation.

Longstanding co-operation in promoting human rights and dignity, ensuring justice, strengthening the Rule of Law and countering threats to it, but also promoting participation and diversity in a democratic society have allowed to consolidate results and ensure sustainability. This approach also caters to progressive programming whereby new interventions build on progress made or shortcomings identified in the course of ongoing or past initiatives. For example, the second assessment of the compliance with the standards of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings was conducted in 2021 by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) in the framework of a Council of Europe project, using GRETA-like monitoring methodology. In this area, a new assessment could be envisaged within an upcoming project to update findings and fine-tune support accordingly. Moreover, following the adoption by the National Assembly of an amendment to the Constitution which gave direct effect to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) adopted the first report assessing the alignment of measures on violence against women with the Istanbul Convention.

Synergies between the projects are systematically sought in the Council of Europe co-operation activities and special attention is paid to transversal issues, such as gender mainstreaming, Human Rights Approach and environmental considerations, but also thematic issues such as data protection and good governance.

The evolution of the situation on the ground may require an update of this document. Therefore, this document should not be considered as limiting the Council of Europe's engagement and potential interventions in other relevant and associated fields, in accordance with emerging needs of the partners.

The projects in the document are funded from multiple sources including the European Union, voluntary contributions from donor countries and the Council of Europe's ordinary budget. This document also reflects the relevant projects included in the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III" (2023-2026), implementing the Statement of Intent for the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the European Union Enlargement Region and the Eastern Partnership and Southern Mediterranean countries.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGE	Agency for Gender Equality
ACFCNM	Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
AJK	Kosovo Journalists Association
AKM	Association of Kosovo Municipalities
AML/CFT	Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism
AMSCA	Agency for Managing Sequestered and Confiscated Assets
AoJ	Academy of Justice
CC	Constitutional Court
CEPEJ	European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CPT	European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CSO	Civil society organisation
DGI	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law
DGII	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ECRML	European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
ECSR	European Committee of Social Rights
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ELSA	European Law Students Association
ESC	European Social Charter
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
FCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FIU	Financial Intelligence Unit
FPIK	Forensic Psychiatry Institute in Kosovo
GRECO	Group of States against Corruption
GRETA	Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
HELP	European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals
HF	European Union/Council of Europe "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye"
HRU	Human Rights Units of various ministries
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IMC	Independent Media Commission
IaPA	Information and Privacy Agency
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
iPROCEEDS	European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme "Co-operation on Cybercrime: targeting crime proceeds on the Internet and securing electronic evidence"
IKOS	Strengthening the institutions in fight against torture, ill-treatment, and other degrading treatment
JUFREX	European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme "Reinforcing Judicial Expertise on Freedom of Expression and the Media in South-East Europe"
JUFREX II	Action "Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media in South-East Europe" implemented under the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye"
KBA	Kosovo Bar Association
KCS	Kosovo Correctional Service
KIPA	Kosovo Institute for Public Administration
KJC	Kosovo Judicial Council

KoSEJ	Action “Strengthening the Quality and Efficiency of Justice” implemented under the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye”
KPC	Kosovo Prosecutorial Council
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons
MAE	Major Administrative Entity of the Council of Europe
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation
MFA	Ministries of Foreign Affairs
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MONEYVAL	Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism
NAR	Needs assessment report
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
OGG	Office of Good Governance within the Prime Minister’s Office
OIK	Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo
OCSEA	Online child sexual exploitation and abuse
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
P/CVE	Prevention and countering of violent extremism
PECK	European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme “Project against Economic Crime in Kosovo*”
PHD	Prison Healthcare Department
PRO-FREX	Action “Protecting Freedom of Expression and of the Media” implemented under the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye”
RTK	Radio Television of Kosovo
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEE	South-East Europe
SEELS	South-East European Law School Network
SLAPP	Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VEP	Violent and extremist prisoner
WAJ	Action “Women’s Access to Justice in the Western Balkans”
WAVE	Women Against Violence Europe Network

1) SECURING HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

1.1. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Activity PMM 4174	1.1.1. HELP IN THE WESTERN BALKANS 2026 (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The project proposal intends to build further on the achievements and goals of previous HELP projects in South-East Europe and will continue to respond to persistent legal training needs in the field of human rights in the region and at domestic level. Its main intended outcomes focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further strengthening the capacity of training institutions for judges and prosecutors, bar associations and universities to provide high-quality training and education on human rights; and • further enhancing the capacity of (current and future) legal professionals/justice sector players to effectively and coherently apply European human rights standards at the domestic level in their daily work. <p>Beyond consolidating the existing HELP Network of training institutions for judges, prosecutors and lawyers and improving the harmonised implementation of European standards on human rights, the project will further optimise the consistently growing number of users of the HELP e-learning platform and support the translation of additional HELP courses into languages of the region.</p> <p>Considering the transversal nature of the HELP programme, synergies will continue to be ensured with other Council of Europe projects.</p>
Main partners:	Academy of Justice (AoJ) and Kosovo Bar Association (KBA), Albanian School of Magistrates and National Chamber of Advocates; Centre for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training and Bar Association of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Centre for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training and Bar Association of the Republika Srpska; Centre for Training in Judiciary and State Prosecution and Bar Association of Montenegro; Judicial Academy of the Republic of Serbia and Serbian Bar Association; Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors and Bar Association of North Macedonia; Universities.
Duration	12 months (1/1/2026 – 31/12/2026)
Type of Project	Regional
Funding	€80,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 2508	1.1.2. LEGAL PROFESSIONALS (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>By virtue of Article 22 of the Constitution, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is directly applicable and, in case of conflict, has priority over domestic laws and other acts of public institutions. Moreover, Article 53 of the Constitution provides that human rights and fundamental freedoms shall be interpreted in light of the ECtHR case law. The necessary precondition for achieving a uniform interpretation and effective implementation of human rights is that all legal practitioners (judges, lawyers, and prosecutors) should be familiar with European human rights standards and be able to apply them in concrete situations.</p> <p>Accordingly, the proposed project will focus on these professionals in order to facilitate a more human rights-friendly justice, mainstream human rights standards among legal professionals and equip lawyers and law students with the knowledge and skills to better address human rights violations. It will directly target legal professionals (judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and law students), the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA) and law faculties. The</p>

	<p>project will contribute to increasing human rights protection by focusing on the following outcomes:</p> <p>Enhancing the capacities of legal professionals to effectively and coherently apply European human rights standards at the local level; Increasing the knowledge and practical skills of future legal professionals (law students) on how to apply European human rights standards in their professional life.</p> <p>To achieve these outcomes, it will focus on the following components: Supporting the Academy of Justice (AoJ) by (1) strengthening the human rights training curricula; (2) enhancing the Academy's capacity to conduct quality human rights trainings; (3) boosting its uptake and use of digital technologies; (4) and strengthening the training capacities of the KBA Training centre. Supporting law faculties by (1) integrating human rights education into the existing bachelor programmes; (2) assisting the running of the newly established international human rights master programme; and (3) promoting interactive, practical, and accessible e-learning tools to law students.</p>
Main partners	AoK; Universities of Pristina and Mitrovicë / Mitrovica; KBA
Duration	24 months (1/1/2026 – 31/12/2028)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€889,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 4098	1.1.3. ENHANCING JUDICIAL PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Consecutive projects targeting the Constitutional Court (CC) have brought to light vast and unmet needs in the broader judiciary, as well as in the legal profession, which form the backbone of the system for human rights protection. The Academy of Justice (AoJ) requires support to develop and to institutionalise a comprehensive programme on the ECtHR case-law, and to integrate human rights issues into relevant courses for both candidate and serving judges and prosecutors. Efforts to reach lawyers should also be intensified to ensure that a full-fledged training programme on the Convention's system is available to all lawyers.</p> <p>The project will ensure convergence among all actors along the justice chain and will be implemented along three areas of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to improve the quality of applications lodged with the Constitutional Court, by strengthening the capacity of lawyers and civil society organisations to claim and to protect applicants' rights before all relevant courts. - to support judicial redress of human rights violations by domestic courts, by developing the professional capacities and knowledge of judges and prosecutors at all levels regarding the case-law of the ECtHR and of the CC, and by facilitating the establishment of research and case-law units within courts wherever possible. - to foster the implementation of European human rights standards, by facilitating joint analysis by legislative, executive and judicial branches, by developing the capacities within the Office for Good Governance within the Prime Minister's Office and/or within the Ministry of Justice in the field of European human rights standards, and by strengthening the ability of civil society organisations to engage in strategic litigation.

	The proposed intervention echoes the conclusions of the European Union 2024 Enlargement report, highlighting the need to address “the poor performance by defence lawyers,” as well as “the quality of indictments and judgments in criminal law.” For the first time, legal aid agencies and civil society organisations will also be targeted. Considering the surge in the volume of applications to the Constitutional Court (+40% between 2023 and 2024), the proposed project will reinforce the institutional capacity of the Constitutional Court and further contribute to the sustainability of results achieved under previous projects.
Main partners	Constitutional Court, KBA, Kosovo Supreme Court, Ordinary Courts, Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC), Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC), Academy of Justice (AoJ), Agency for Free Legal Aid, Ministry of Justice, Office of Good Governance (OGG), Civil Society Organisations
Duration	1/1/2026 – 31/12/2027 (24 months)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€830,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

2) ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE, GOOD HEALTH AND A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

2.1. Effective implementation of the European Social Charter

Activity PMM 3528	2.1.1. PROMOTING RESPECT FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS IN LINE WITH THE STANDARDS OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>While the European Social Charter is not listed in the Constitution among directly applicable human rights instruments, increased alignment with European standards to enhance respect for social rights would further contribute to a sustainable democratic society.</p> <p>In this context, the proposed project aims to provide authorities with the opportunity to strengthen their understanding of the Charter’s content, mechanisms and its role in the broader interconnected human rights framework. Accordingly, it notably aims to contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting Council of Europe standards in the field of social rights, based on the European Social Charter and on the case law of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) as the Charter’s monitoring body. - Raising awareness within institutions, civil society and among social partners about Charter rights and social dialogue mechanisms, while strengthening their ability to advocate for and monitor social and labour rights. - Better aligning legislation, policies and practices with the Charter standards.
Main partners	Office of Good Governance, Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, Ombudsperson Institution, Social and Economic Council, Trade Unions, Civil Society Organisations
Duration	24 months (01/01/2026 – 31/12/2027)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€950,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

2.2 Health and human rights

Activity PMM 4237	2.2.1. SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY BY ADDRESSING DRUG USE AND ADDICTIONS IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The project aims to further strengthen public health and safety in the South-East Europe (SEE) region by preventing and reducing the risks and harms associated with drug use and addictive behaviours, while placing human rights at the centre of policy responses. Drawing on the Pompidou Group's ongoing co-operation, outcomes and lessons learned from activities implemented at both SEE regional and Beneficiary-specific levels, the project will serve as a platform for broader collaboration among professionals working in the areas of drug and addiction policy, criminal justice, community-based treatment, and related fields. The project's logical framework is underpinned by the Pompidou Group's theory of change, encompassing prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery, and supply reduction.</p> <p>The project encompasses both Beneficiary-specific and regional dimensions, which will be closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing.</p> <p>At the Beneficiary-specific level, the project will assist authorities and stakeholders in assessing existing policy frameworks to identify potential gaps and priority areas for co-operation, as well as in improving their practices.</p> <p>Technical expertise and support will be provided to help Beneficiaries implement concrete changes based on the identified priorities and in line with the four-pillar drug policy approach, ensuring that domestic policies and related responses are grounded in good practices and aligned with European and other international human rights standards.</p> <p>At the regional level, focusing on jointly identified priority issues, the project will facilitate dialogue to foster both regional and wider international co-operation on drug and addiction matters. It will promote discussion and coordinated responses to newly emerging threats (e.g. social media use and other digital addictions, drug-related cybercrime, and the rapid emergence of synthetic drugs). The project will also strengthen regional mechanisms for recognising, reporting, and preventing illicit drug production and trafficking activities.</p> <p>The project will provide policy advice and guidance, legal and technical expertise, cross-sectoral collaboration and professional networking, and capacity-building initiatives. Activities will be tailored to the specific needs of diverse groups of stakeholders, including policymakers, legal experts, healthcare professionals, psychologists, social workers, educators, law enforcement officers, and criminal justice practitioners. The project will also promote joint collaborative initiatives involving a diverse range of professionals, including researchers and representatives of civil society organisations.</p>
Main partners	Ministries of Health; Ministries of Interior; Ministries of Justice; Prison and probation authorities; State mental health/addictions institutions
Duration	30 months (01/01/2026 – 01/06/2028)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	approx. €114,286 out of a total budget of €800,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

2.3 Protection of the environment and human rights

Activity PMM3080	2.3.1. HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE (REGIONAL, ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>The South-East Europe region has a history of heavy industrialisation, followed by political instability and a transition period which led to environmental degradation presenting a threat to human rights, the natural habitat, and the quality of future development in the affected communities. Despite important efforts to improve domestic legislation and practice on environmental matters, challenges persist.</p> <p>In 2022, the United Nations General Assembly recognised the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right. At the Council of Europe level, addressing environmental challenges and aligning relevant legislation and practice with European and international standards has been identified as one of the priority areas of the Organisation’s work. The Reykjavik Declaration underlines “the urgency of taking co-ordinated action to protect the environment by countering the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity”. It also emphasises that “human rights and the environment are intertwined and that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of human rights by present and future generations”.</p> <p>The Council of Europe has developed several conventions recognising the right to a healthy environment. Although not explicitly enshrined in the Convention or the European Social Charter, the case law of the European Court and the conclusions of the Committee of the European Social Charter affirm the undeniable interconnectedness between the environment and human rights.</p> <p>The ECtHR has established that environmental degradation can result in human rights violations, insisting on the obligation to investigate such violations and compensate individual victims, but also to prevent such violations from occurring.</p> <p>Its rich jurisprudence addresses environmental issues pertaining to situations similar to those that exist in South-East Europe, including on regulatory frameworks to improve waste management, compulsory environmental impact assessments and access to information about the risk of military tests for health.</p> <p>The standards elaborated by the ECtHR in its judgments are applicable in any jurisdiction applying the ECHR. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers should accordingly use the Court’s case law in domestic proceedings and interpret domestic legal provisions in the light of these standards. These include, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the positive obligation of a state to protect life against industrial activities, which are dangerous by their very nature; - procedural and participatory rights in environmental matters such as the right to access to information, the right to public participation in decision-making processes and the right to access to justice; - the obligation to enable individuals and groups to contribute to the public debate by disseminating information and ideas on matters of public interest. <p>Against this backdrop, the current project contributes to setting the scene for a better protection of the environment and human rights by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contributing to a more consistent application of the ECHR and the Convention-compliant adjudication of environmental cases;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supporting authorities in strengthening environmental protection at the domestic level; - raising awareness among legal professionals on the relationship between the protection of human rights and the environment under the ECHR; - equipping legal professionals with skills on how to litigate environmental cases applying the standards of the ECtHR.
Main partners	Environmental Ministries; Ministries of Justice, Supreme and Constitutional Courts, Bar associations, Environmental institutions; Ombudsperson institutions, Civil Society Organisations
Duration	24 months (01/03/2024-01/02/2026)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	approx. €83,300 out of a total budget of €500,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 4199	2.3.2. ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Building upon the achievements of the initial project (see 2.3.1), the proposed project will pursue efforts to strengthen the effective application of European standards in the area of human rights and environmental protection, enhancing the ability of domestic stakeholders to implement relevant judgments of the European Court by addressing both procedural and substantive aspects.</p> <p>To this end, the project will draw on the findings and recommendations of the Baseline study of legislation, policy and judicial practice on human rights and environment in South-East Europe prepared under the previous project, which identifies gaps and provides key insights instrumental for achieving legal and institutional improvements in this area.</p> <p>The project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - create a “Green Justice Network” – a platform connecting judges, prosecutors and legal practitioners working on environmental and human rights cases to enable peer-to-peer exchange, case discussions, rapid knowledge sharing, and coordinated responses; - Develop practical guidance materials that are co-created with judicial representatives, including bench books, guidelines on legal pathways for bringing environmental cases before domestic authorities, checklists, model reasoning for environmental claims and tailor-made training modules; - Integrate a youth perspective into the ongoing work, including through mock trials and educational dialogues on Council of Europe standards linking environmental protection to human rights.
Main partners	Legal professionals, Supreme Courts, Constitutional Courts, Bar Associations, Judicial Academies/ Magisterial schools/Training centres, Prosecutorial offices, Ombudsperson Institutions, executive branches (ministries and agencies) and representatives of CSOs in South-East Europe and youth implementing partners.
Duration	24 months (01/03/2026 – 29/02/2028)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	approx. €150,000 out of a total budget of €900,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

3) ACTING FOR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND RESPECT

3.1 Gender equality – Violence against women and domestic violence – Human Trafficking

Activity PMM2926	3.1.1. WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (WAJ) (REGIONAL, ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) has been made directly applicable by the Kosovo Assembly in September 2020. All other Beneficiaries in South-East Europe have ratified the Istanbul Convention. Since 2017, the monitoring bodies of the Istanbul Convention have provided a number of recommendations to the Beneficiaries in the region and ensured continuous monitoring through GREVIO baseline evaluation reports.</p> <p>The regional project uses the European Convention of Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights case law, GREVIO findings and Committee of the Parties recommendations as a compass in the area of access to justice for victims of violence against women and domestic violence, giving special attention to enhancing the overall responsiveness and gender sensitivity of the justice chain through targeted engagement with key judiciary – both judges and prosecutors. In this context, the project aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support the authorities' efforts on advancements both in the procedural and the substantive application of guaranteeing equal access to justice for women and men; - establish a network of judicial training institutions on women's access to justice to help sustain change in the medium term in the region; - address the long-lasting and emerging barriers to women's access to justice and identify how GREVIO findings and Committee of the Parties recommendations can be operationalised by strategically targeting the supply side of the justice system and justice professionals in particular. <p>The project's main target groups are legal professionals (judges, prosecutors, lawyers, law students) and judicial training institutions, as well as the authorities in charge of administering data collection and justice practices.</p> <p>Its objectives are to build regional and local capacities in order to guarantee equal access to justice free of barriers related to gender, to count on trained legal professionals – including future generations of professionals – that can deliver quality, gender-responsive justice in line with European standards, and to provide resources to sustain this capacity in the future.</p>
Main partners	AoJ, School of Magistrates of Albania; Centre for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training of the Republika Srpska; Centre for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Centre for Training in Judiciary and State Prosecution of Montenegro; Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors of North Macedonia; Judicial Academy of the Republic of Serbia; South East European Law School Network (SEELS); Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE- Network); European Law Students Association (ELSA).
Duration	48 months (01/01/2023 – 31/12/2026)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III approx. €166,667 out of a total budget €1,000,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM 4155	3.1.2. BRIDGING THE GAPS STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Building on the expanding case-law of the European Court of Human Rights on gender stereotyping in connection with Article 6 of the Convention (right to fair trial), on existing research, latest GREVIO findings and on achievements of earlier co-operation, this regional follow-up project will continue to foster the implementation of Council of Europe standards relevant to gender equality and women's rights, primarily the Istanbul Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights.</p> <p>It will aim at further embedding a gender perspective in the justice system, both through outreach to the demand side of justice (women seeking justice, in particular victims of violence) and to the supply side (legal professionals and their training institutions, including law faculties), thereby striving to reduce the gap between legal and policy frameworks and their actual implementation.</p> <p>The project will work at grassroot level with civil society organisations in all six Beneficiaries to raise awareness on barriers and obstacles faced by women seeking justice, to dispel myths concerning the Istanbul Convention (in particular gender stereotypes) and to enhance women's legal literacy, with a particular focus on women from disadvantaged communities. In parallel, future legal professionals will be further equipped with knowledge and skills on practical cases highlighting the gendered barriers to access to justice. Ultimately, the proposed project aims to empower women seeking redress, thereby also contributing to increased trust into the judiciary.</p>
Main partners	AoJ, School of Magistrates of Albania; Centre for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training of the Republika Srpska; Centre for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Centre for Training in Judiciary and State Prosecution of Montenegro; Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors of North Macedonia; Judicial Academy of the Republic of Serbia; South East European Law School Network (SEELS); Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE- Network); European Law Students Association (ELSA).
Duration	36 months (01/01/2027 – 31/12/2029)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	approx. €216,600 out of a total budget of €1,300,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM2992	3.1.3. ALIGNING LAWS AND POLICIES WITH THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION (ONGOING)
Purpose	The Programme for Gender Equality (2020-2024) acknowledges that co-ordination, inter-institutional co-operation, and risk management are still inadequate. It also identifies several issues hindering women's rights and women's access to justice and security, such as the lack of a follow-up mechanism for monitoring gender-based violence cases, deferment in enforcing and issuing protection orders in cases of domestic violence, the imposition of minor penalties by the courts (or even no penalties at all) and the lack of programmes for the psycho-social treatment of perpetrators and for the reintegration of victims of domestic violence.

	<p>Accordingly, the project aims at strengthening institutional capacities to prevent and counter violence against women and domestic violence in line with the standards of the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention, which is directly applicable since September 2020.</p> <p>It also builds on the recommendations and guidance produced within previous Council of Europe projects, focusing on the implementation of the most pressing recommendations issued by the evaluation on the alignment of laws and policies with the Istanbul Convention, which was completed with the involvement of GREVIO in the context of the Council of Europe project “Reinforcing the Fight against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – Phase III” (which ended in early 2023).</p> <p>The project also contributes towards the implementation of the “National Strategy on Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women 2022 – 2026” and puts a particular focus on multi-agency interaction between relevant actors on the ground to deliver across the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Integrated Policies). Co-ordination is ensured with other international actors on the ground, as an important part of the work on combating violence against women and domestic violence is supported by the United Nations (UN), the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).</p>
Main partners	Secretariat of the National Coordinator against DV and VAW; Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare; Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI); Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Health; CC; Police; Probation Services; Agency for Gender Equality (AGE); Agency for Free Legal Aid ; Academy of Justice; Civil Society Organisations
Duration	42 months (01/03/2023 – 31/08/2026)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€700,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM 4039	3.1.4 IMPLEMENTING THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Building on successive Council of Europe projects on violence against women and domestic violence, the project proposal aims to continue supporting authorities in strengthening domestic capacities to prevent and counter violence against women and domestic violence in line with Council of Europe standards.</p> <p>It will notably assist authorities in following up on the “Assessment of the alignment of Kosovo*’s laws, policies and other measures with the standards of the Istanbul Convention” following GREVIO methodology and published in November 2022, seeking to further strengthen domestic legal, policy and institutional frameworks in line with the Conventions’ four pillars.</p> <p>Dedicated support envisaged will particularly focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aligning legal and policy frameworks with the Istanbul Convention and strengthening prevention efforts by developing and expanding perpetrators’ programmes to probation services and addressing emerging issues such as technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, based on GREVIO’s General Recommendation No.1 and the forthcoming Council of Europe Recommendation on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing policy support to the authorities in strengthening their service provision to victims of violence against women and domestic violence at particular risk of intersectional discrimination - building the capacities of relevant professionals with a multi-agency approach, including the Office of the National Coordinator for Protection against domestic Violence, Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence, as well as judges, prosecutors, police, lawyers, social workers, probation officers, and educational staff. - In joint partnership with civil society organisations, increase capacities and the awareness of healthcare providers on their role to identify, document and report violence against women. - In co-operation with the local authorities and civil society organisations, raising awareness with a view to addressing the most pressing issues that nurture and justify violent mentalities towards women, with a focus on prevention and the role of men and boys.
Main partners	Ministry of Justice, Office of the National Coordinator for Protection against Domestic Violence, Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence; Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI); Police; Agency for Gender Equality (AGE); Agency for Free Legal Aid; Correctional Services; Probation Services; Academy of Justice (AoJ); Civil Society Organisations
Duration	48 months (01/03/2026 – 28/02/2030)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€1,560,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM 3648	3.1.5. STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Designed as a continuation of the project “Enhancing anti-trafficking actions (2022-2023)”, which allowed, inter alia, for strengthened multi-agency co-ordination and the establishment of a data collection system on victims of trafficking, the proposed project will continue to mobilise support for the implementation of GRETA’s recommendations issued in the context of the Second report on the compliance of Kosovo* with the standards of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, published in October 2021.</p> <p>Accordingly, the project will contribute to further preventing human trafficking, protecting the rights of victims and prosecuting traffickers, with particular emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - building the operational capacities of relevant stakeholders in the public and non-governmental sectors to facilitate victims’ access to justice and effective remedies, including compensation. - improving the investigations and prosecutions of human trafficking cases, leading to effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions. - developing co-operation with the private sector through the establishment of public-private partnerships to improve the proactive identification, assistance, and reintegration of victims, including victims of child trafficking and trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, with cross-cutting attention to online-facilitated trafficking and the use of digital tools.

Main partners	Ministry of Education, Science Technology, and Innovation (MESTI); Ministry of Finance, Office of the Chief State Prosecutor; Labour Inspectorate; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Justice; KJC; Police; Media; Civil Society Organisations
Duration	01/01/2026 – 30/06/2027 (18 months)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€550,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity	3.1.6. COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The project aims to strengthen the child protection framework by supporting the implementation of the Law on Child Protection adopted in 2019. The law innovates by establishing of a new integrated system of child protection at both central and local levels. It also includes a clear prohibition of corporal punishment. Progress was made in the adoption of sub-legal acts on the Law on the rights of the child. The Council of Europe will support the implementation of the Law, in particular in setting up an integrated child protection system, which remains lacking. Support will also be provided to implement the new cybersecurity strategy for 2023-2027 with its accompanying action plan, specifically on how to detect and respond to online child sexual abuse.</p> <p>Authorities will be supported in the development of secondary legislation to bring the child protection framework fully in line with international standards and to ensure a smooth implementation of the law. The latter will also be complemented by a dedicated nation-wide awareness-raising initiative.</p> <p>Overall, the project aims to provide support to authorities, professionals and civil society in areas where the Council of Europe has critical added value, including on child-friendly justice, the rights of the child in the digital environment, prevention and the protection of children from sexual exploitation and abuse (including online) and other forms of violence, with a focus on child victims and witnesses of crimes. The best interests of the child in proceedings, including in domestic violence and family law cases, will also be considered in line with the Istanbul Convention. In support of the reform agenda on the rights of the child, proposed activities focus on four main components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support legal and policy reform foreseen by the Law on Child Protection in line with Council of Europe standards, in particular the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention); - Adapt the Barnahus¹ model to the local context to promote an integrated system of child protection in accordance with European standards and promising practices from some Council of Europe member States; - Raise awareness and support efforts to prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse and other forms of violence against children, and to promote the rights of the child in the digital environment;

¹ In 2015, the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee) has recognised the Barnahus model as an example of good practice for an effective and coordinated response to child sexual abuse.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build the capacities of authorities and professionals to respond to child abuse cases, including in the digital environment, and to adopt child-friendly practices - Support authorities in the establishment of a hotline for cases of (online) child sexual exploitation and abuse <p>To ensure synergies with existing interventions as well as the sustainability and local ownership of the project, activities will be planned and implemented in close collaboration with local partners and key stakeholders. Due attention will be paid not to overlap with on-going similar activities, particularly capacity-building efforts.</p>
Main partners	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Health, OIK, AoJ, Police, OGG, Civil Society Organisations.
Duration	24 months (01/01/2026 – 31/12/2027)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€550,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

3.2 Anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion – Roma and travellers – National minorities, regional or minority languages – LGBTI – Migrants

Activity PMM 3247	3.2.1 PROMOTING EQUALITY AND COMBATING RACISM AND INTOLERANCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (REGIONAL, ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>The project builds on earlier work for the promotion of diversity and equality carried out under the second phase of the Horizontal Facility (2019-2022), both through Beneficiary-specific interventions and the regional project “Promotion of diversity and equality in the Western Balkans,” in line with the reports of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on the main trends in the fields of racism and intolerance. In its substantive part, the project also capitalises on the experience of the “Block the hatred. Share the love!” awareness-raising initiative rolled out between 2020-2022. In this context, the present project further aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reinforce authorities’ capacities to analyse and understand racism as a systemic phenomenon, by taking measures to align with European standards in this respect; - enable the representatives of law enforcement and equality bodies from the region to respond to the changing societal, political and policy landscape in relation to combating discrimination, specifically hate speech and hate crime in South-East Europe, in the remit of their respective competencies, by facilitating peer exchanges; - assist CSOs and youth beneficiaries in the development of tools and in strengthening their capacities to counter hate speech, including through improved dialogue with vulnerable groups and the public at large; - strengthen synergies and co-operation at the regional level to increase the equality bodies’, police administrations’, and CSOs’ capacities to contribute to the necessary social change at local level. <p>The project is based on the creation of synergies at the regional level to increase institutions’ potential to contribute to the necessary social change at domestic and local level, involving close co-operation and networking with CSOs and other non-state actors, such as youth and sports organisations, educational institutions, and religious leaders (where/when appropriate).</p>
Main partners	Equality Bodies; Police Administrations; Local Self-Governments; MoIA, MoJ, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports; Ombudsperson Institutions, Civil Society Organisations

Duration	48 months (01/01/2023 – 31/12/2026)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III, approx. €116,667 out of a total of budget €700,000. Additional €90,000 were allocated to the regional project from the Council of Europe funds.
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DG II)

Activity PMM 4229	3.2.2. DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY FOR ALL IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Building on the earlier achievements of anti-racism networks built in the region, the proposed regional project aims at promoting a continued coherent approach in South-East Europe to address racism and racial discrimination in line with European standards, also offering support to reforms in the equality domain as per Beneficiary-specific needs.</p> <p>It will ensure continuation of the efforts to reach out to citizens and people to make societies more inclusive, free from hatred and racism.</p> <p>Based on Council of Europe standards and recommendations, the case-law of the ECtHR as well as on the EU-acquis, the project will also be framed in the context of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and Beneficiaries' respective Reform Agendas, as well as EU accession negotiations when applicable.</p> <p>As for the Beneficiary-specific component, specific objectives, as listed below, will ensure continuation of earlier started reforms, notably to ensure implementation of standards related to addressing hatred and racism, up to the judicial track record. Further, it will echo the regional component as for raising awareness on equality in the society. It will also aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasingly focus on racism as the underlying driver of discrimination and hate speech and new anti-rights movements targeting vulnerable groups and undermining societal cohesion; - Update the training programmes of the Justice Academy, the Kosovo Police, and the Bar Association on combating discrimination and hate speech; - Reinforcement of the capacities of the Anti-Discrimination Department of the Ombudsperson Institution and the OGG to address new forms of racism and discrimination; - Empower Youth, sport organisations and other local stakeholders to fight racism, discrimination and intolerance.
Main partners	Equality Bodies; Ombudsperson Institutions; Police Administrations; MoIA, MoJ, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports; Civil Society Organisations
Duration	36 months (01/01/2027 – 31/12/2029)
Type of project	Regional – South-East Europe
Funding	approx. €750,000 out of a total budget of €4,500,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity	PMM3250 3.2.3. COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AND HATRED (ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>The present project capitalises on the results of the previous initiative carried out under the second phase of the Horizontal Facility on “Promotion of diversity and equality”, which brought forward reforms of human rights mechanisms at central and local levels. It hence aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - further support alignment with European standards pertaining to anti-discrimination, hate speech and hate crime, notably those emanating from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). - follow up on the recommendations in the area of fundamental rights contained in the latest European Union enlargement reports. <p>Divided into three components (policy/legislative support, capacity building, awareness raising), the project continues, inter alia, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide recommendations on legal and institutional improvements, including on legal and non-legal redress to hatred. - Support the OGG and the OIK in implementing the anti-discrimination framework while assisting municipalities in bringing the results of the reform closer to people/citizens. - Assist the OIK in enhancing its capacities to respond to individual cases of discrimination and to provide redress to victims; - Assist the OGG in ensuring legislative alignment on anti-discrimination across the board, while maintaining structural support (assistance in budgetary and financial matters, advisory role to the Anti-discrimination Units in ministries/municipalities on specific grounds of discrimination); - Support vulnerable individuals in discrimination cases in line with European standards and ECtHR case law, specifically on Article 14 and Article 1 of Protocol 12, with specific activities devoted to improving the free legal aid system, in co-operation with the Agency for Free Legal Aid and the AoJ. - Reinforce both institutional and CSO responses to hatred based on a comprehensive gap analysis; - Strengthen CSOs’ skills on reporting hate speech / hate crime and assisting victims seeking redress, including on addressing antigypsyism; - Develop reporting and monitoring tools for the OIK to improve data collection and its institutional response to discrimination cases, in line with the Law on Protection from Discrimination; - Support the elaboration of policy frameworks and SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender identity)- related legislation; - Roll out the “Block the hatred. Share the love!” awareness-raising initiative in pilot municipalities, targeting diverse populations and creating specific messages addressing local inclusion-related challenges, in close co-operation with the Ombudsperson as a key partner.
Main partners	Central and Municipal Institutions; OGG; MoJ; Human Rights Structures; Human Rights Units of Various Ministries (HRUs); OIK; CSOs at the Central and Local Level
Duration	48 months (01/01/2023 – 31/12/2026)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III, €450,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM 3643	3.2.4. STRENGTHENING THE EQUALITY BODY FUNCTION OF THE OMBUDSPERSON OFFICE (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>This project proposal aims to improve the way the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo (OIK) addresses cases of discrimination, hate speech, and hate crime, in accordance with its mandate as an equality body. It also aims to strengthen the institution's capacity to engage with the public on these critical issues.</p> <p>The project is grounded in European standards on anti-discrimination - particularly those set by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) - and aligns with the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights. In doing so, the project seeks not only to improve the OIK's operational effectiveness, but also to prepare the institution for emerging challenges linked to the use of artificial intelligence in both public and private domains.</p> <p>The project furthermore aims to contribute to safeguarding human rights in the digital age by enhancing the OIK's ability to monitor, assess, and respond to discriminatory risks posed by AI-driven systems.</p> <p>Special emphasis will be placed on public awareness, institutional transparency, and developing internal tools and procedures to ensure non-discriminatory practices in line with evolving European standards. The project's expected results are listed below :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cases of discrimination, hate speech, and hate crime are processed by the Ombudsperson Institution in accordance with its mandate as an equality body and in line with European standards; - The Ombudsperson Institution improves its outreach and engagement with the general public, raising awareness and promoting understanding of issues related to discrimination, hate speech, and hate crime; - The institutional capacity of the Ombudsperson Institution is strengthened to effectively monitor, assess, and address the potential discriminatory impacts of artificial intelligence systems on human rights, including through the development of internal guidelines and analytical tools.
Main partners	OIK and its regional offices
Duration	24 months (01/07/2026 – 30/06/2028)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€700,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM3590	3.2.5. FOSTERING SOCIETAL COHESION BY REINFORCING MINORITY RIGHTS AND MINORITY LANGUAGES (ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>By virtue of article 58 of the Constitution, <i>"the standards set forth in the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) have to be respected."</i> As assessed in the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFCNM) issued in February 2023, solid legal and policy frameworks for the protection of persons belonging to national minorities are in place, but society remains profoundly fragmented, with divides over ethnic and language lines. Consistent recommendations consequently emphasise the need to better implement the existing legal framework, ensure co-ordination among different stakeholders and foster the use of minority languages at the central and local levels.</p>

	<p>Aimed at fostering reconciliation and societal cohesion at different levels of society by developing tools and action plans to support the implementation of the ACFNCM recommendations and the subsequent Committee of Ministers' Resolution CM/ResCMN(2023)12, the present project supports the integration and practical application of relevant standards in the work of institutions, particularly focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrating European standards, especially those from the FCNM and ECRML, in the work of institutions in charge of policy making on minority issues. - Supporting the Technical Working Group (TWG) on the FCNM; - Supporting all measures to ensure the full, equal, and adequate implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages, including by creating a favourable environment, conducive to the learning of minority languages; - Improving the capacity of law enforcement at the central and local level to provide services to people with diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds; - Promoting minority languages among students and academia; - Promoting the use of minority languages at the local level, through selected initiatives targeting local institutions; - Supporting independent local non-majority media to increase awareness among the majority population and their authorities about issues affecting minorities. - Implementing a small grant scheme for initiatives by municipalities and CSOs fostering interethnic dialogue.
Main partners	Office of the Language Commissioner; Translation and Harmonisation Unit within the OPM; Office of Community Affairs; OGG; OIK; MESTI; Ministry of Local Governance; Ministry for Communities and Returns; Ministry of Culture; MoIA; Municipalities; Civil Society Organisations
Duration	24 months (1/7/2024 – 30/6/2026)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€700,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM 4369	3.2.6. FOSTERING SOCIETAL COHESION BY REINFORCING MINORITY RIGHTS AND MINORITY LANGUAGES – PHASE II (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Building on the achievements of the first phase, the proposed project aims to ensure the sustainability of initiatives and tools developed for domestic authorities responsible for monitoring and protecting the rights of national minorities. Accordingly, the Technical Working Group for implementing the FCNM standards (TWG) will be further supported to address structural, operational, and communication challenges, including by raising awareness on its mandate and responsibilities, thereby facilitating more effective collaboration and support from relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Based on Training Modules previously accredited by the Ministry of Education, the project furthermore plans to enhance the capacities of schoolteachers to promote multilingual education and promote cross-cultural exchanges bridging linguistic divides.</p> <p>In addition, previously identified gaps regarding inconsistent definitions of hate crime will be addressed by empowering community police officers to better recognise and report on incidents motivated on ethnic or religious grounds, including on the basis of standardised guidelines. Accordingly, the proposed project is designed along three main components:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continuously supporting the TWG, law enforcement officials and the Office of the Language Commissioner, including through dedicated capacity building. - rolling out of training modules in the primary education sector, based on Council of Europe minority standards. - awareness raising of both central and municipal institutions and the general public about the rights of national minorities and relevant European standards, including through local initiatives targeting media outlets, youth and civil society.
Main partners	Office of the Language Commissioner; OGG; OIK; MESTI; Ministry of Local Governance; Ministry for Communities and Returns; Ministry of Culture; MoIA; Municipalities; University of Pristina (Law Faculty); Media; Civil Society Organisations
Duration	01/07/2026 – 30/06/2028 (24 months)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€800,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM3472	3.2.7. ROMA INTEGRATION - PHASE III (REGIONAL, ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>Building on the two previous phases implemented by the Regional Co-operation Council (2016-2022), the European Union /Council of Europe regional joint programme “Roma Integration – Phase III” further supports the implementation of Roma-inclusion policies by enhancing access to basic socio-economic rights for marginalised communities while fostering equality and promoting meaningful participation of Roma in public life.</p> <p>It furthermore assists the progressive implementation in the region of the “2020-2030 European Union Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation”, ensuring continued progress as regards the fulfilment of Roma inclusion commitments made in the context of chapter 23 negotiations, the 2019 Declaration of Western Balkans partners on Roma integration within the European Union enlargement process (Poznan Declaration) and subsequent commitments endorsed within the Berlin process summits.</p> <p>With the overall aim of increasing equality, inclusion, and participation of Roma in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, the Roma Integration Phase III programme encompasses three strands of support:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) fostering equality and addressing antigypsyism; 2) socio-economic integration (education, employment, housing, civil registration, green and digital transition); 3) building capacities of central-level institutions to mainstream, program, budget, implement, and monitor the inclusion of Roma. <p>The intervention is complementary to the Beneficiary-specific project “Fostering societal cohesion by reinforcing minority rights and minority languages”.</p>
Main partners	National Roma Contact Points / OGG, line ministries, ombudsperson institutions, Employment Agencies, Media, Civil Society Organisations
Duration	36 months (01/05/2023-30/04/2026)

Type of project	Regional
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe regional Joint Programme: €375,000 out of a total budget of €3,000,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM 3959	3.2.8. EMPOWERHER SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN WOMEN THROUGH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Despite efforts to advance Roma inclusion, marginalisation persists, and many Roma continue to face discrimination, antigypsyism and socioeconomic exclusion in their daily lives. In core areas of social life, such as education, employment and health, the situation of Roma women is generally worse than that of Roma men. Roma women often face multiple barriers to employment due to traditional gender roles, low qualifications and limited options of childcare except within the household. Living in segregated areas makes access to the labour market even more difficult. Against this backdrop, women belonging to Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities remain particularly vulnerable with high poverty and unemployment rates.</p> <p>The “Strategy for the Advancement of the Rights of the Roma and Ashkali Communities 2022-2026” highlights the need for targeted employment and economic opportunities, recognising discrimination and low education as key barriers.</p> <p>The proposed project builds on the findings, achievements and measures initiated by convergent European Union / Council of Europe joint programmes, such as “Roma Integration III” (see 3.2.7) and “ROMACTED II”, which have laid groundwork for local partnerships and entrepreneurship initiatives supporting Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian women. It will hence aim to strengthen and render more sustainable actions ensuring their economic empowerment and meaningful participation in local development. Incorporating a Market System Development approach and adopting a human rights perspective, it will address obstacles to formal employment, credit access, and skills development. The project will foster partnerships between economic operators, local authorities and civil society to ensure inclusive growth based on local development plans, supporting entrepreneurship through grants, training, mentorship, and business incubators.</p> <p>Employment mediators will be empowered to facilitate outreach and job matching, while co-operation with the private sector will raise awareness and promote inclusive recruitment practices.</p>
Main partners	National Roma Contact Point / OGG, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Agency for Gender Equality, Economic Chamber, Municipalities, associative structures of businesses, Civil Society Organisations
Duration	36 months (01/01/2026 – 31/12/2028)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€1,300,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

4) BUILDING TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

4.1. Independence and efficiency of justice

Activity PMM 3173	4.1.1. TOWARDS A BETTER EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS OF JUDICIAL REFORM EFFORTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – PHASE II “DASHBOARD WESTERN BALKANS II” (REGIONAL, ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>This “phase II” regional project is a follow-up to the first namesake action carried out under the second phase of the European Union/Council of Europe “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye”. It responds to partner institutions’ strong interest in the outcomes of a regular data-based assessment of the functioning of their judicial systems.</p> <p>The project foresees that partner institutions in the South-East Europe region further address outstanding steps needed to improve the quality, efficiency, and accountability of their respective justice systems in line with European standards, based on the findings and the methodology of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).</p> <p>Accordingly, it aims to further improve mechanisms of collection, processing and analysis of judicial data in accordance with CEPEJ standards and tools, as a basis for judicial reforms. In this context, the continuation of yearly cycles of data collection is to ensure the sustainability of results and strengthened ownership by all Beneficiaries.</p> <p>The project is complementary to the Beneficiary-specific project “Strengthening the quality and efficiency of justice – KoSEJ III” (see 4.1.3) which provides dedicated support to judicial institutions to establish a sustainable process of data collection and analysis.</p>
Main partners	Ministries of Justice (MoJs) (notably statistical departments); Courts and other Judicial Institutions; Appointed CEPEJ Dashboard Correspondents and their networks of data collection within Judicial Institutions
Duration	48 months (01/01/2023 – 31/12/2026)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III (approx. €234,000 out of a total budget of €1,404,000)
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 4178	4.1.2. TOWARDS A BETTER EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS OF JUDICIAL REFORM EFFORTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – “DASHBOARD WESTERN BALKANS PHASE III” (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The proposed regional project “Dashboard Western Balkans phase III” will build on the achievements of the previous two phases and further strengthen the capacity of Beneficiaries in South-East Europe to collect, process, and analyse judicial data in line with the CEPEJ methodology.</p> <p>It will maintain CEPEJ’s role as a trusted partner and support the long-term goal of aligning the region’s judicial systems with European standards through reliable and comparable data.</p> <p>Having consolidated its role as a reliable source of data, the Dashboard Western Balkans action will further enhance a longitudinal perspective,</p>

	<p>enabling the identification of trends and developments over time and allowing for evidence-based assessments of the functioning of judicial systems, thereby providing a comprehensive evaluation of judicial reform outcomes.</p> <p>Accordingly, the third phase aims to further consolidate sustainable and institutional judicial data collection mechanisms, ensure the continuity and annual data cycles and reinforce institutional ownership and accountability. It will continue to provide tailored technical guidance to support further refinement of data collection, processing and analysis and facilitate the integration of CEPEJ indicators into domestic data systems.</p>
Main partners	Ministries of Justice (MoJs) (notably statistical departments); Courts and other Judicial Institutions; Appointed CEPEJ Dashboard Correspondents and their networks of data collection within Judicial Institutions, High Judicial Council
Duration	36 months (01/01/2027 – 31/12/2029)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	approx. 234,000 out of a total budget of €1,404,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM3303	4.1.3. STRENGTHENING THE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF JUSTICE – KOSEJ III (ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>Strengthening the rule of law with efficient policies and judicial infrastructures lies at the heart of ongoing domestic reforms. Implemented under the European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility III, the present project builds upon progress achieved under KoSEJ and KoSEJ II to support the work of domestic beneficiaries in improving the quality and efficiency of the justice system in accordance with CEPEJ tools, as required under the Strategy on Rule of Law Sector 2021-2026 and the Action Plan adopted in August 2021.</p> <p>In this context, the project is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supporting policymakers and authorities responsible for the administration of justice in improving the efficiency of the justice system as foreseen in the Rule of Law Strategy, with strengthened time management of judicial proceedings, further digitalisation, and data-driven judicial sector policies; - improving, in co-ordination with the regional “Dashboard” project (see 4.1.1.), the collection, processing, and analysis of data on the functioning of the judicial system and judicial statistics according to CEPEJ methodology; - supporting courts and prosecution services in being more efficient through active case management, improved working methods with lawyers and increased use of alternative dispute resolution and new information technologies. - ensuring that the public service of justice addresses the specific needs of justice professionals and court users, including through digital tools, based on strengthened communication between courts and their users and facilitated access to courts; - strengthening the Kosovo Training Academy’s programme through targeted capacity building, based on specific needs identified and areas where CEPEJ can bring added value.

Main partners	Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC); MoJ; Academy of Justice (AoJ); Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC); Kosovo Bar Association (KBA), Chamber of Mediation; Judges; Prosecutors; Courts; Citizens.
Duration	48 months (01/01/2023 – 31/12/2026)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III: €779,000 Additional €55,000 were allocated to the project from the Council of Europe funds.
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 4213	4.1.4. STRENGTHENING THE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF JUSTICE - (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Building on the results achieved under the KOSEJ, KOSEJ II, and KOSEJ III projects, as well as on the continued implementation of the Strategy for the Rule of Law Sector 2021–2026 and its updated Action Plan (February 2025), this project aims to further support domestic judicial institutions in improving the quality, efficiency and transparency of the justice system. It also builds on the Package of Laws on justice reforms submitted to the Venice Commission in December 2024, which received an opinion in March 2025, including new provisions on the performance evaluation of judges, prosecutors, court presidents, and chief prosecutors. To be implemented in alignment with CEPEJ tools, the proposed action will focus on four key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving case management by introducing and consolidating effective and standardised practices recommended by KOSEJ III experts in pilot courts and prosecution offices, including alert mechanisms, a triage approach, standardised templates and procedures and better resource allocation. In this context, support will be provided to track case progress and identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies using accurate data from the Case Management Information system (CMIS). <p>Provide technical support to the Ministry of Justice in developing evidence-based strategies and policy documents in relation to quality and efficiency of the justice system, contributing to related policymaking and ensuring the delivery of high-quality services within the free legal professions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancing transparency in the work of courts and prosecution offices to foster public trust by improving civil society’s capacity to understand judicial statistics and by strengthening the relationship between the judiciary and the media to support better communication practices. <p>Strengthening leadership accountability by reinforcing the use of data in KJC and KPC decision-making processes, enhancing performance evaluation mechanisms for court presidents and chief prosecutors, judges and prosecutors focusing on both qualitative and quantitative indicators. In close collaboration with the regional Dashboard project (see 4.1.1 and 4.1.2), the project will also strive to enhance co-ordination between KJC, KPC, and the Ministry of Justice with a view to contributing to a more coherent, transparent, and accountable justice sector.</p>
Main partners	Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC); MoJ; Academy of Justice (AoJ); Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC); Kosovo Bar Association (KBA), Chamber of Mediation; Judges; Prosecutors; Courts; Citizens.
Duration	36 months (01/01/2027 – 31/12/2029)
Type of project	Bilateral

Funding	€900,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

4.2 Prisons – Police – Deprivation of liberty

Activity PMM2952	4.2.1. ENHANCING CO-OPERATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS IN MANAGING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN PRISONS AND PREVENTING FURTHER RADICALISATION AFTER RELEASE (REGIONAL, ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>Despite significant efforts and progress achieved in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) and radicalisation in prisons in South-East Europe, many challenges remain to be addressed. Although all Beneficiaries in the region have established a legal and institutional framework in the field of P/CVE (largely aligned with the European Union <i>acquis</i> and international anti-terrorism instruments) and are signatories of strategic P/CVE documents, several areas continue to require systemic improvements, especially as regards prison and probation systems.</p> <p>Addressing the needs of the Beneficiaries in the Western Balkans region spotlighted in the course of the project “Enhancing penitentiary capacities in addressing radicalisation in prisons in the Western Balkans” implemented under the second phase of the Horizontal Facility, the present project consequently focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhancing capacities of the penitentiary systems to prevent radicalisations in prisons and apply tools and programmes specifically designed for management, rehabilitation and preparation for release for violence extremist prisoners (VEPs), also providing for regional experience; - strengthening preconditions needed for a “whole of society” multi-agency approach in the post-penal and reintegration support to VEPs and other targeted prisoners, upon their release and return to their communities, through capacity building; - improving protection of mental health and the provision of related services to VEPs, marginalised prisoners and prisoners vulnerable to radicalisation; - increasing employment prospects for released VEPs and other targeted prisoners through educational, and/or occupational/vocational programmes in prison; - strengthening probation services’ capacities and staff skills for an effective rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders (VEOs); - increasing knowledge and awareness of the Beneficiaries in the region on approaches and best practices in application of conditional release and community sanctions, policies and practices to address prison overcrowding, allocation practices concerning VEPs, marginalised prisoners and those vulnerable to radicalisation, etc.... - The project closely co-ordinates with other Beneficiary-specific projects in the penitentiary field.
Main partners	Prison and Probation services (Ministries of Justice); Ministries of Labour and Social Policy; Ministries of Health; P/CVE co-ordination mechanisms; Security/Intelligence Agencies; Civil Society Organisations.
Duration	48 months (01/01/2023 – 31/12/2026)
Type of project	Regional, including Beneficiary-specific component
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III approx. €275,000 out of €1,650,000 Additional €90,000 were allocated to the regional project from the Council of Europe funds.
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 4266	4.2.2. Enhancing penitentiary co-operation in the Western Balkans (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The project builds on the foundations and results achieved through the previous phases of the Horizontal Facility (HF II and HF III) and continues to address systemic and social challenges to radicalisation in prisons, in order to ensure lasting impact in a more stable and safer region.</p> <p>It contributes to ensuring quality “Prison-exit Continuum” of radicalised inmates and VEPs, as well as other marginalised and vulnerable prisoners at risk from radicalisation, enabling their smooth trajectory from life under imprisonment to life in the community.</p> <p>The project will continue to enhance multi-agency approach to countering radicalisation and violent extremism, enabling exchange of experiences, information and practices between professionals in the region, facilitate their networking and providing best EU expertise in the field. It contributes to putting in place preconditions for implementation of a ‘whole of society’ approach to post-release support for the reintegration of released VEPs, vulnerable and marginalised prisoners, by enhancing capacities of all stakeholders relevant in provision of the post penal assistance and support in reintegration in communities. The project enables standardisation of practices in the field of community sanctions and measures in the whole Western Balkans region through exchange of knowledge, best practices and expertise.</p> <p>It also aims to further raise awareness and knowledge on Council of Europe and other international standards and European best practices, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable category of prisoners (including women in prisons, imprisoned parents, Roma, LGBTI, elderly, disabled, prisoners with mental disabilities, etc.). Specific thematic priority areas to be addressed include: management of VEPs (with a focus on post-penal support to ensure their effective reintegration and reduce recidivism); enhancement of vocational training capacities in prisons offered to VEPs, vulnerable and marginalised prisoners; devising strategies for addressing overcrowding in prisons; enhancing capacities of probation services, not only in working with VEOs, but also with women returnees and other vulnerable categories; addressing the needs of women and parents in prison (based on gender-sensitive, trauma-informed approaches and inter-agency co-ordination) and ensuring the promotion and protection of mental health in prisons.</p>
Main partners	Ministries of Justice
Duration	36 months (01/01/2027 – 31/12/2029)
Type of project	Regional – South-East Europe
Funding	approx. €350,000 out of a total budget of €2,100,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 3691	4.2.3. FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF THE TREATMENT OF PERSONS DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The proposed project will continue to support reform initiatives to further consolidate achieved results under previous projects and expand the work to additional beneficiaries, thus aiming to enable more favourable conditions for treatment and healthcare provision to persons deprived of liberty, compliant with the Council of Europe standards.</p> <p>It will further support authorities in enhancing access to, quality of provision and organisation of healthcare services in prisons, including mental health, forensic psychiatric institutions and social welfare facilities, addressing newly identified challenges and reinforcing sustainable solutions for improving the treatment and protecting the rights of convicted persons, patients under involuntary psychiatric hospitalisation and persons with mental disabilities placed in special social care institutions.</p> <p>At the same time, the project will facilitate further institutional development of the KCS and KPS as human rights compliant entities, which principles of care and rehabilitation of its inmates will be further strengthened, also ensuring prevention of any form of ill-treatment. The proposed project will hence focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving healthcare provision, including mental health, in prisons and other closed institutions, with a focus on individualised, multidisciplinary and least-restrictive treatment approaches; - Strengthening rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and other persons deprived of their liberty, through application of various rehabilitation tools and programmes, also encouraging the use of purposeful activities; - Building institutional capacity of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health in developing policy frameworks to support rights-based, patient-oriented healthcare and rehabilitation approaches and methods, and in ensuring equivalence and continuity of healthcare for prisoners and other persons deprived of their liberty; - Enhancing capacities of prison and probation staff in detecting, assessing and responding to mental health needs of offenders and in other related areas; - Fostering effective inter-institutional co-operation and co-ordination within the criminal justice system with the aim to improve the provision of healthcare to persons deprived of liberty by ensuring continuity of care and treatment pathways, supported by joint protocols, regular co-ordination, and joint staff trainings; - Promoting accountability of KCS and KPS as rights-compliant institutions with robust systems to prevent ill-treatment and ensuring safe, respectful and dignified care.
Main partners	Ministry of Health (Prison Health Department, Institute for Forensic Psychiatry, Special Institute for Persons with Mental and Physical Disabilities), Ministry of Justice (Correctional Service, Probation Service, Prison Inspectorate), OIK/NPM, Civil Society Organisations.
Duration	36 months (01/01/2026 – 31/12/2028)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€1,350,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 3156	4.2.4. STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TORTURE, ILL-TREATMENT AND OTHER DEGRADING TREATMENT AND SECURING THE RIGHT TO LIBERTY FOR CITIZENS (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The Council of Europe has so far played an important role in the prevention of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment by supporting the capacities of the Ombudsperson Institution (in particular the National Preventative Mechanism) and the judiciary in strengthening the application of human rights standards.</p> <p>Previous interventions have resulted in a strengthened NPM, increased monitoring missions and enhanced capacities of the Justice Academy (AoJ). Building on these achievements, the project proposal aims to further strengthen the capacities of the Justice Academy to produce quality training in the field of prohibition of torture and decreased detention measures. It will focus on increasing knowledge and understanding of the judiciary to better apply standards of the ECtHR in their domestic jurisprudence in this field. It will also continue working with law students and bringing Council of Europe added value when it comes to mainstreaming human rights education within existing Law Universities curricula. The project will ultimately continue supporting the authorities to better implement NPM recommendations to improve conditions of persons deprived of liberty.</p> <p>Accordingly, the project will contribute towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aligning domestic policy and practice with the ECtHR standards related to the prohibition of torture; conditions of detention, and the right to liberty and security, based also on NPM and CPT recommendations; - Further enhancing the capacities of judges and prosecutors to effectively investigate torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment (in continuation of the project “Strengthening the institutions in the fight against torture, ill-treatment and other degrading treatment” (IKOS, 2020-2021); - Enhancing the capacities of the judiciary to reduce the use of pre-trial detention and to apply more alternatives to detention; increasing the awareness legal professionals, lawyers and civil society in this regard; - Increasing co-operation and awareness among relevant stakeholders, ensuring that the rights of persons deprived of liberty are respected; - Mainstreaming human rights standards in these respective fields with law faculties and contributing to increased understanding among law students.
Main partners	AoJ, Ministry of Justice, OIK/NPM, University of Pristina (Law Faculty), KPC, KJC, KBA, Civil Society Organisations.
Duration	24 months (01/01/2026 – 31/12/2027)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€600,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 4259	4.2.5. ENHANCING HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANT POLICING (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The project proposal draws upon the findings of the CPT as well as reports from the NPM of the Ombudsperson Institution (OIK) related to the treatment of persons detained and interviewed by the Kosovo Police during criminal investigations. Moreover, it builds on the results achieved and recommendations provided under the previous Council of Europe action “Enhancing human rights policing” implemented in the first phase of the Horizontal Facility, coupled with the findings from a fact-finding mission carried out by the Division of Co-operation in Police and Deprivation of Liberty (CPDL) in May 2025.</p> <p>The proposed initiative will further strengthen the protection of human rights of persons under police custody, while enhancing human rights-compliant policing, through a multi-dimensional approach focused on improving police conduct, oversight mechanisms, and institutional capacities in accordance with the Council of Europe standards and European best practices, thereby reinforcing the results achieved within the current and previous Council of Europe co-operation activities in Kosovo*.</p> <p>Accordingly, the proposed project will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening professional and operational capacities of the Kosovo Police in interviewing persons suspected of involvement in criminal offences by supporting the development of related skills and promoting modern investigative interviewing aimed at obtaining accurate and reliable information, in accordance with CPT standards. - Further strengthening the protection of human rights of persons under police custody by enhancing the skills of police officers on police ethics, human rights standards, prevention of ill-treatment and related topics, as well as by sustaining training provision on these and related topics. - Improving the treatment of vulnerable groups in police custody by enhancing related police capacities, including in managing detainees with mental health problems. - Strengthening the capacity of the Police Inspectorate (PIK) to carry out effective and regular oversight, based on improved inspection protocols and analytical reporting, and strengthening PIK’s co-operation and communication with NPM and CSOs. - Enhancing the institutional capacities of the prosecution office by streamlining procedures related to their oversight of police officers and PIK, as well as strengthening their co-operation and exchange of information with PIK.
Main partners	Ministry of Internal Affairs (Kosovo Police, Police Inspectorate of Kosovo), Ministry of Justice, Public Prosecutors Office, National Prevention Mechanism of the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo, Kosovo Agency for Public Safety (KAPS), Civil Society Organisations.
Duration	36 months (01/01/2026 – 31/12/2028)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€1,250,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

5) UPHOLDING SAFETY, SECURITY AND INTEGRITY OF SOCIETY AND PERSONS

5.1 Corruption – Money Laundering – Economic crime

Activity PMM3033	5.1.1. ACTION AGAINST ECONOMIC CRIME IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (REGIONAL, ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>Building on results achieved in the first and second phases of the Horizontal Facility, the regional project provides a platform for developing common understanding, facilitating co-operation and exchange of practices with a view to further improving the effectiveness of the prevention and fight against economic crime in South-East Europe, aligned with international standards and good practices. It responds to identified needs and applies its methodology horizontally to all Beneficiaries in the fight against corruption, money laundering and countering terrorist financing. Importantly, the project also largely focuses on emerging challenges and addresses gaps identified by various monitoring mechanisms – such as the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) or the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), where applicable.</p> <p>In complementarity with Beneficiary-specific support, the project provides capacity building, expert advice, and opportunities for exchanges at the regional level to tackle challenges associated with the implementation of new technologies in the provision of financial services and the fight against environmental crimes, including with a view to addressing substantial cross-border aspects.</p> <p>In these areas, the regional project is well placed to raise awareness about responses and innovations developed in other jurisdictions, assess current practices and identify the regional typologies in order to offer policy recommendations, and provide a framework for co-operation and exchange of experiences between the Beneficiaries.</p>
Main partners	Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI); Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA); Ministry of Justice (MoJ); Anti-corruption Bodies and Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs); Supervisory & Regulatory Authorities; Judicial and Prosecutorial Services; Customs and Borders Authorities; Law Enforcement Agencies; Private Sector (Banking, other Financial and Non-Financial Sectors); Civil Society Organisations.
Duration	48 months (01/01/2023 - 31/12/2026)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III approx. €108,000 out of a total budget of €650,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM3521	5.1.2. COUNTERING CORRUPTION AND MONEY LAUNDERING - (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The project builds on the previous joint European Union / Council of Europe programmes and will bring continuous assistance to strengthen the framework to combat economic crime, including the effective prevention and fight against corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing.</p> <p>Against the backdrop of rule of law reforms and revised legal and operational frameworks, technical assistance will focus on the following priority needs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the sustained operationalisation of legal and institutional framework on prevention and combating corruption (such as transparency of beneficial ownership, lobbying regulation, corruption investigation and prosecution capacities, asset freezing/confiscation, public procurement and other relevant) to increase the opportunities for

	<p>enhanced integrity framework and countering corruption-related challenges.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Improve ML/TF/PF prevention and effectiveness of supervisory, law enforcement and criminal justice sector in the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of money laundering, terrorist financing and related predicate offences. With regard to AML/CFT supervisory oversight, focused support will aim at improving risk-based supervision especially in non-financial sectors and in relation with emerging trends and new technologies. 3. Strengthen the capacities of authorities to freeze, seize, confiscate and manage proceeds of crime while enhancing co-operation with international partners for cross-border investigations and asset sharing. 4. Fostered inter-agency co-operation in combating economic crime. <p>Therefore, further support appears paramount to put measures into effect and ensure concrete and sustainable results, including in drafting by-laws, policies and standard operating procedures, while strengthening capacities on evolving standards and those of newly established institutions. In addition, awareness raising remains necessary on emerging risks including new technologies and mitigation measures.</p> <p>The project will thus look at developing effective and sustainable capacities for the implementation of AC and AML/CFT measures among practitioners and policy makers by striving to close existing gaps in the regulatory system and, most importantly, by ensuring that local officials handling economic crime cases and enforcing prevention mechanisms have the tools, knowledge and skills to efficiently and effectively fulfil their respective professional duties beyond the project duration.</p> <p>The project will further enhance capacities regarding the use of Council of Europe methodological tools for assessing and managing corruption risks and provide advice on the development of targeted measures to address corruption risks.</p> <p>It will continue to support the regulation of priority areas such as asset declaration and audit, the prevention of conflict of interest, whistleblower protection and the establishment of an integrity framework for public officials and a regulatory and operational framework on lobbying. In the framework of prevention of money laundering and related supervision, the project will further ensure capacity building for the investigation and prosecution of high-level economic crime cases and the proactive financial investigation in complex cases.</p> <p>It will also support the implementation of relevant action plans stemming from the money laundering and terrorist financing risks assessment processes, in line with the Council of Europe methodology and identified needs, including specific on-the-job training activities, institutional capacity building for AML/CFT risk-based compliance and supervision as well as further development of skills on priority issues such as the transparency of beneficial ownership and the related registry, the implementation of targeted financial sanctions, and management and mitigation of ML/TF risks related to new technologies.</p> <p>In order to bolster the capacities of authorities to trace, confiscate and manage criminal assets, additional support will focus on targeted aspects of the asset recovery framework, capacity building on non-conviction-based confiscation for law enforcement and the criminal justice sector, while enhancing capacities of the Asset Recovery Office. It will also encompass follow-up initiatives for the management of seized and confiscated assets, further strengthening the role and capacities of AMSCA and an asset management cycle including the social reuse of assets.</p>
--	--

	Finally, the project will further enhance tools for inter-agency co-operation concerning the investigation and prosecution of money laundering and terrorism financing and strengthen capacities to record and share statistical data relating to criminal investigations.
Main partners	Agency for Prevention of Corruption (APC); Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU); State Prosecution and Special Prosecutor's Office; AMSCA; Central Bank (CBK), Police.
Duration	36 months (1/1/2026 – 31/12/2028)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€2,205,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

5.2 Digital challenges : Artificial intelligence – Cybercrime – Data Protection

Activity PMM3530	5.2.1. CYBERSEE – CO-OPERATION ON CYBERCRIME: ENHANCED ACTION ON CYBERCRIME AND ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE AND TÜRKIYE (REGIONAL, ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>Societies in South-Eastern Europe and Türkiye increasingly rely on ICT and related services. They are thus exposed to cybercrime threats, with major implications on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Ransomware attacks against critical infrastructure (such as those encountered by Albania and Montenegro in 2022), together with other forms of cybercrime that have an even broader geographical impact, underline the need for a stronger focus on the interface between cybersecurity measures and criminal justice responses to cybercrime.</p> <p>Ransom payments extorted through such attacks and other forms of cybercrime underline the continued need to focus on the search, seizure, and confiscation of proceeds from crime online. The same is true for online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA), which is of increasing concern in the region. Against this backdrop, the strengthening of capacities to secure evidence of any form of cybercrime from computer systems for its use in criminal proceedings is crucial to ensure a criminal justice response that is both effective and in line with human rights and rule of law requirements.</p> <p>CYBERSEE consolidates achievements of the previous iPROCEEDS and iPROCEEDS-2 programmes, respectively focusing on building capacity on online crime proceeds and aligning legislation with the Budapest Convention, and particularly focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further improving legislation and policy frameworks on cybercrime and electronic evidence in line with the Budapest Convention, its Second Protocol and related instruments; - Strengthening capacities of criminal justice authorities for investigation, prosecution and adjudication of cybercrime offences, including ransomware attacks and OCSEA, as well as for the use of electronic evidence; - Enhancing capacities of criminal justice authorities to exchange information with cybersecurity institutions, as well as to co-operate internationally and with the private sector, on the basis of the Second Protocol to the Budapest Convention.
Main partners	MoJ; Police (Cybercrime Sector and Financial Investigation Unit); Police Training Institutions; Prosecutor's Office; Judicial training Institutions; CERTs/ CIRTs; Internet Service Providers (local and multinational); Banking Associations and information security companies; Data Protection Community (Commissioners, Inspectors and Ombudspersons)

Duration	42 months (1/1/2024 – 30/6/2027)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme approx. €786,000 out of a total budget of €5,500,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM 4140	5.2.2. CYBERSEE-PRO PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO CYBERCRIME IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE AND TÜRKIYE (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Most Beneficiaries in South-East Europe have considerably strengthened their cybercrime legislation and institutional frameworks to investigate and prosecute cybercrime in recent years, including by setting up cybercrime Police Directorates with additional staff, resources and competences. Further reforms are nevertheless needed to enable authorities to co-operate with the Parties to the Second Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention (2AP) and develop criminal justice capacities to ensure strategic approaches at domestic level, leverage cybercrime response at local level and effectively deal with new forms of cybercrime.</p> <p>Building on the achievements of previous European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programmes (iPROCEEDS, iPROCEEDS-2, CYBERSEE), the overall objective of CyberSEE-PRO aims to establish a sustainable, strategic criminal justice response to cybercrime in the region through improved legal frameworks, technical methods, strategies and real-time effective co-operation and information exchange.</p> <p>The project will seek to equip relevant authorities with the skills, tools and forensic methods to investigate complex crimes involving illegal use of cryptocurrencies and artificial intelligence (AI). Additionally, it will aim to support the development of flexible, on-demand training systems to address operational needs and evolving cybercrime threats.</p>
Main partners	<p>Police, Criminal Justice Authorities, Police training institutions, Judicial training institutions</p> <p>International partners: CEPOL, EUROJUST, European Law Enforcement Agency (Europol), Interpol</p>
Duration	42 months (01/07/2027 – 31/12/2030)
Type of project	Regional – South-East Europe + Türkiye
Funding	Approx. €793,000 out of a total budget of €5,556,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

Activity PMM2542	5.2.3. OCTOPUS PROJECT: CYBERKOP – PROJECT ON ENHANCED ACTION ON CYBERCRIME AND ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE (ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>The Octopus project is a multilateral intervention which supports the strengthening of human rights and the rule of law in the cyberspace based on the implementation of the standards of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and its additional Protocols. It builds on the broad consensus among the international community that capacity building is an effective way to address the challenges of cybercrime and electronic evidence.</p> <p>To this end, Octopus addresses the following needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting co-operation among multiple stakeholders to foster agreement on challenges and responses, mainly through the organisation of Octopus Conferences which have become major international fora on cybercrime as a matter of criminal justice.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting the work of the Cybercrime Convention Committee by ensuring in particular that Parties and Observers from Africa, Asia/Pacific and Latin America are able to participate and have a voice. - Providing specific advice on legislation and support to the training of criminal justice authorities to ensure the implementation of the standards enshrined in the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, as well as its additional Protocols. <p>The Beneficiary-specific context and needs are addressed under the “Cyberkop” component of the intervention. Adopted in February 2023, the Law on Cyber Security has set out the principles and operational framework in the field of cybersecurity, defining the institutions in charge of the implementation of the cybersecurity policy and the prevention of cybercrime threats, the responsibilities of the authorities and critical service operators, paving the way for inter-institutional co-operation.</p> <p>While previous capacity-building on cybercrime investigation, electronic evidence, international co-operation, and financial investigations has been delivered to police officers and magistrates working at the central level, additional specialised capacity building appeared required for criminal justice authorities at the local level, especially since cybercrime offences, digital forensics and first responder activities are increasingly being dealt with by mainstream police units and prosecutors’ offices.</p> <p>In this context, the Cyberkop component focuses on strengthening the authorities’ capacities to handle electronic evidence, investigate cybercrime and co-operate with foreign jurisdictions, which are crucial factors to ensure a criminal justice response that is both effective and in line with human rights and rule-of-law standards.</p> <p>Support also aims at further enhancing domestic legislation and criminal justice capacities on cybercrime and electronic evidence in line with the standards of the Budapest Convention and its Second Protocol, with a focus on the following lines of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting the implementation of the standards of the Second Additional Protocol in domestic criminal law and criminal procedure law and further alignment of domestic legislation with the standards of the Budapest Convention. - Providing capacity-building on online fraud and money laundering to investigators, prosecutors, and judges, including through practical exercises and the development of guides and templates for the handling of electronic evidence. - Fostering co-operation with public/private service providers and international co-operation based on the tools of the Budapest Convention and the Second Additional Protocol.
Main partners	Criminal justice authorities (at the central and local level), Police
Duration	30 months (18/09/2023 – 18/03/2026)
Type of project	Multilateral
Funding	approx. €750,000 out of a total budget €10,000,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DG I)

Activity PMM 3159	5.2.4. PROMOTING PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>This intervention aims to strengthen the protection of personal data by supporting the practical implementation of the domestic data protection law and its alignment with European standards, notably the Convention for the Protection of Individuals concerning Automatic Processing of Personal Data (CETS No. 108) and its amending Protocol (CETS No. 223) and where relevant the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As authorities advance with rapid digitalisation and face the growing impact of AI systems on governance and service delivery, the project seeks to build capacities, improve compliance, and foster a sustainable data protection culture across institutions, sectors, and society.</p> <p>To this end, the project addresses the following needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the implementation of the Law on Personal Data Protection, including assistance with policy development, secondary legislation, sector-specific guidance, and training for public authorities, regulated industries, and other stakeholder groups. • Ensuring harmonisation of domestic legislation, strategies, and operational practices with the GDPR and Convention 108+, including expert advice, gap analyses, and structured follow-up to legislative reforms. • Developing of coherent policy guidance on the intersection of AI and data protection, helping authorities anticipate risks and apply data protection principles to algorithmic systems. • Advising on integrating privacy by design and by default into the ongoing digitalisation of public services, ensuring that new platforms, registries, and workflows comply with modern data protection requirements. • Strengthening the role and effectiveness of Data Protection Officers through training programmes, model guidelines, co-operation with business and professional chambers, support on DPO legislation, and early exploration of certification mechanisms. • Conducting a structured needs assessment to identify institutional, legal, technical, and societal gaps, and to shape long-term capacity-building priorities. • Raising awareness of both target groups and the wider public to promote understanding of rights, responsibilities, and emerging challenges in the data-driven environment. <p>The intervention will combine legislative support, institutional capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and public awareness activities to help authorities advance toward a resilient, accountable, and rights-respecting data protection framework aligned with European and international standards.</p>
Main partners	Information and Privacy Agency (IaPa); Institute for Public Administration; Ministry of Local Government Administration; Ministry of Public Administration: University of Pristina, Academy of Justice, Law enforcement
Duration	30 months (01/07/2026 – 31/12/2028)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€750,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI)

6) ANCHORING DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

6.1 Freedom of expression and information - Safety of journalists

Activity PMM3312	6.1.1. PROTECTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OF THE MEDIA IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (PRO-FREX) (REGIONAL, ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>Freedom of expression and freedom of the media in South-East Europe are still identified as issues of concern by international organisations and highlighted in regular EU enlargement reports. The latter consistently call for increased efforts by rule of law institutions to follow up on threats and attacks against journalists.</p> <p>The regional PRO-FREX project thus aims at improving the environment for freedom of expression by supporting - in close synergy with all six Beneficiary-specific actions - the awareness and capacities of key institutions and civil society organisations in contributing to the implementation of European standards in the fields of access to information and data protection, regulation and co-regulation for better digital environments, and the safety and quality of journalism. In particular, the project aims at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promoting and supporting full alignment with Council of Europe standards related to freedom of expression, including the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention, CETS No. 205), the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals concerning Automatic Processing of Personal Data (CETS No. 108) and its amending Protocol (CETS No. 223); - promoting better digital environments for the exercise of freedom of expression by reinforcing the regional network of media regulatory authorities and their capacities in the regulation, co-regulation, and monitoring of digital environments in line with European standards; - strengthening the capacities of local stakeholders and their policy orientation on freedom of expression and media standards in key areas such as the safety of journalists and responsible journalism. <p>The project is a follow-up to previous European Union/Council of Europe interventions in the field of freedom of expression and freedom of the media ("Reinforcing Judicial Expertise on Freedom of Expression and the Media in South-East Europe" - JUFREX) and "Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media in South-East Europe" - JUFREX II).</p> <p>It works with policymakers, independent authorities in the field of access to information and data protection, audio-visual regulatory authorities, public service media and internet providers, media actors, journalists and their associations, judiciary and law enforcement and civil society.</p> <p>The project adopts an inclusive approach and works with all relevant duty-bearers and stakeholders in order to ensure capacity building and to facilitate dialogue between all actors involved in the protection of freedom of expression and freedom of the media.</p>
Main partners	Independent Authorities for Access to Information and Data Protection; Media Regulatory Authorities; Journalists' Associations; Training Institutions for Judiciary; Law enforcement representatives; Lawyers
Duration	48 months (01/01/2023 – 31/12/2026)
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III, approx. €86,667 out of a total budget of €520,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM3309	6.1.2. PROTECTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OF THE MEDIA (PRO-FREX) (ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>Building upon the achievements of regional European Union/Council of Europe interventions (JUFREX, JUFREX II and PRO-FREX, see 6.1.1) contributing to a safe, professional, and free media environment, the Beneficiary-specific project focuses on three main objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - further improving the judicial application of European standards in freedom of expression and media-related cases. - strengthening the capacities of the media regulator in exercising its mandate and independence. - enhancing the effectiveness of media actors in performing their rights and duties in line with European standards. <p>The intervention is based on a holistic approach to promote freedom of expression and freedom of the media in line with Council for Europe standards, based on the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and different sectors. The project is accordingly structured around three components addressing main target groups: 1) Judiciary, legal professionals, and law enforcement; 2) Media Regulatory Authority; 3) Journalists and other media actors.</p> <p>Under its first component, the project enhances the capacity of a pool of trainers in collaboration with the AoJ and the KBA, also supporting the Police Directorate in its efforts to protect and ensure the safety of journalists.</p> <p>Under its second component, the project supports the Independent Media Commission (IMC) in exercising its mandate independently.</p> <p>Under its third component, the project promotes advanced co-operation with civil society and journalistic associations, including on furthering the agenda for legislative and institutional reforms in strategic fields, including the protection of journalistic sources and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs).</p>
Main partners	Domestic Training Institutions for the Judiciary; Lawyers; Law enforcement representatives; Media Regulatory Authority; Public Media Services; Associations of journalists
Duration	48 months (01/01/2023 – 31/12/2026)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – phase III, €550,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM4397	6.1.3. PROTECTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION INTEGRITY (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The 2025 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Kosovo* 99th (out of 180), a sharp decline from its 75th position the previous year. This drop reflects persistent structural challenges affecting the media environment, including political pressure, disinformation and the growing influence of digital platforms on public debate. Building on the achievements of the ongoing project “Protecting Freedom of Expression and of the Media (PRO-FREX)” and responding to emerging challenges linked to disinformation, digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI), the proposed project aims to safeguard the right to freedom of expression and access to information while fostering an environment of trustworthy, pluralistic and ethical media.</p>

	<p>Recent studies further underscore the urgency of this intervention. The 2024 Vulnerability Index of Disinformation recorded a sharp rise in Kosovo**s overall vulnerability score from 41/100 in 2022 to 57/100 in 2024, with the most significant deterioration in the media environment, political landscape and public perception domains. Similarly, the 2025 report of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo*, entitled “Beyond Fake News – Advancing Media and Information Literacy for an Informed Society” highlights the deepening impact of digital manipulation and algorithmic amplification on public trust, urging coordinated institutional responses and investment in media literacy. The BIRN 2023 report further emphasises the structural weaknesses of domestic institutions in countering disinformation and the increasing role of both internal and external actors in spreading manipulative narratives.</p> <p>Against this backdrop, the project will consolidate and expand ongoing efforts to strengthen the institutional, professional, and societal pillars of freedom of expression and information integrity through three interlinked components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Component 1 “Building societal resilience to disinformation, advancing media literacy and promoting self-regulation” focuses on promoting media and information literacy to help citizens critically assess and resist disinformation and manipulation. It also supports ethical journalism and self-regulatory mechanisms, enhances the safety of journalists (with particular attention to local, young and women journalists), and addresses AI-related risks through targeted capacity-building activities, research and multi-stakeholder dialogue. - Component 2 “Strengthening institutional safeguards for freedom of expression, access to information and independent media regulation” seeks to advance the alignment of domestic legislation and institutional practice with Council of Europe and EU standards, while reinforcing the independence and capacities of key bodies such as the Independent Media Commission (IMC), the Information and Privacy Agency (IaPA) and the public service broadcaster (RTK). It further promotes transparency and accountability in media ownership and encourages inclusive, evidence-based dialogue on democratic media governance. - Component 3 “Enhancing the judiciary and law-enforcement capacity to uphold freedom of expression standards” builds on the results achieved under PRO-FREX. This component will further develop the knowledge and skills of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and police officers to apply the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) case law in practice. It will reinforce accountability and remedy mechanisms to counter strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), intimidation and violence targeting journalists and promote closer co-operation and dialogue between judicial institutions and the media community.
Main partners	Academy of Justice (AoJ); Kosovo Bar Association (KBA); Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC); Kosovo Prosecutorial Council; Independent Media Commission (IMC); Information and Privacy Agency (IaPA); Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK); Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK); Ministry of Justice (MoJ); Kosovo Police; Civil Society Organisations
Duration	36 months (01/01/2027 – 31/12/2029)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€1,000,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

6.2 Local democracy

Activity PMM 4208	6.2.1. STRENGTHENING INNOVATIVE DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>In its previous interventions, the Congress has been promoting deliberative democracy and innovative approaches to participation across South-East Europe. This was achieved by building internal capacities of local authorities and their associations and advocating for deliberative processes.</p> <p>With the proposed project, the Congress will consolidate the competences of local authorities to implement innovative forms of democracy, building on the results achieved, on the increased level of awareness and the evident demand in the region.</p> <p>The project aims at enhancing local democracy and supporting the emergence of more transparent and inclusive local public institutions in South-East Europe, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - embedding participatory and deliberative democracy in local decision-making as a complement to representative democracy in six targeted territories in the South-East of Europe; - developing internal capacity of local authorities and their associations to implement participatory approaches in South-East Europe and organise deliberative processes. <p>Selected local authorities will benefit from expert and financial support to implement citizens' assemblies. A pool of local experts will be established to cascade learning and support the implementation of deliberative processes beyond the lifecycle of the project.</p> <p>Technical assistance from the Congress of the Council of Europe will help improve the legal and policy frameworks supporting participatory democracy and civil participation. Partnership with the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) will also ensure sustainable and locally owned project outputs.</p>
Main partners	Local authorities, Associations of Municipalities
Duration	24 months (01/01/2026 – 31/12/2027)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	Approx. €158,000 out of a total budget of €950.000
Relevant MAE	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Activity PMM 3936	6.2.2. ESTABLISHING THE LOCAL OBSERVATORY ON REFORM AGENDAS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (LORAI) (REGIONAL, PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans² sets forth an ambitious framework for accelerating the region's alignment with EU standards, emphasising the need for deep economic integration, extensive reform implementation and stable regional governance to foster economic growth and sustainable development. Recognising the pivotal role of local governments, the plan identifies sub-national governance as essential to realising these objectives, given that local governments are responsible for implementing up to 70% of the EU acquis across various sectors, including</p>

² The Growth Plan outlines four strategic pillars: (1) fostering integration with the EU's Single Market; (2) promoting regional economic cohesion through the Common Regional Market; (3) advancing critical reforms and (4) providing financial support via the Reform and Growth Facility.

	<p>public procurement, environmental management, social policy, energy, climate, and digital transformation.</p> <p>All six Beneficiaries in South-East Europe have since adopted respective Reform Agendas, committing to implementing socio-economic and fundamental reforms. To ensure that local and regional authorities play a meaningful role in this process, the proposed project will support building an inclusive dialogue between all levels of government and function as a platform to inform and guide the local governments in implementing the reforms mandated by the Growth plan, thereby ensuring that reforms generate visible improvements in the quality of life for citizens and achieve the desired economic, environmental and social outcomes. Importantly, by strengthening evidence-based participation of local authorities in the reform process, the project will help local authorities in formulating their policy and investment priorities for the next Reform Agendas and the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034).</p> <p>The project accordingly foresees the establishment of a Local Observatory on Reform Agendas Implementation (LORAI). The latter aims to strengthen a transparent, data-driven and evidence-based monitoring process of the implementation of the Reform Agendas under the Reform and Growth Facility at the local level, reinforcing an inclusive multilevel governance system and acting as a knowledge hub, promoting effective advocacy, knowledge sharing and visibility initiatives.</p> <p>In this context, the project includes dedicated capacity building to address gaps identified during the monitoring process and provides for the sharing of good practices and a unique peer-to-peer approach involving members of the Congress for Local and Regional Authorities. The proposed project will be implemented in partnership with the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Associations of Local Authorities in the region</p>
Main partners	Local authorities, Associations of Local Authorities, NALAS, CEMR
Duration	24 months (01/02/2026 – 31/01/2028)
Type of project	Regional
Funding	Approx. €366,000 out of a total budget of €2,200,000
Relevant MAE	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Activity PMM 3971	6.2.3. STRENGTHENING MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY (ONGOING)
Purpose	<p>Building on the achievements of a previous Beneficiary-specific project (2020-2021), the present project seeks to strengthen the co-operation between central and local authorities in local self-government reform while advancing deliberative and participatory democracy. By increasing synergies between central and local authorities and their association, the action contributes to stronger multilevel governance and enhanced central–local consultation on legislative initiatives and reforms. Accordingly, the project focuses on the following lines of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessing the implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, mapping legislative and policy changes of the past three years with a view to elaborating an Action Plan with tailored measures to address remaining challenges and opportunities - Building capacities of municipalities to act locally as catalysts for change and open government reforms, thereby fostering transparency,

	<p>participation and accountability. In this context, particular focus is placed on the four core areas of the Open Government Partnership Action Plan: digital governance, open data, public participation and anti-corruption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing a Forum of Exchange among selected municipalities and relevant stakeholders to jointly devise solutions and identify good practices in specific areas. <p>A small number of co-designed local initiatives is being implemented in pilot municipalities, promoting public participation in local decision-making, with specific attention paid to the representation of ethnic and linguistic diversity.</p>
Main partners	Ministry of Local Government Administration, Local authorities, Association of Municipalities, Civil Society Organisations.
Duration	21 months (01/01/2025 – 30/09/2026)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€370,000
Relevant MAE	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Activity PMM 4321	6.2.4. STRENGTHENING MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS AT LOCAL LEVEL (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The proposed project aims to further consolidate co-operation between central and local authorities to advance local self-government reform and strengthen local democracy based on the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance and other relevant Council of Europe standards. It builds on the results of the ongoing project “Strengthening multilevel governance and participatory democracy”</p> <p>Capitalising on the updated report on the implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (developed under the previous project, see 6.2.3) and its related action plan of tailored measures to address challenges identified, the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance will assist central authorities in their follow-up to the findings of the report, including through a peer review process. In addition, the Congress will support the drafting of a new Strategy for Local Self-Government for a ten-year period (the current one expires in 2026).</p> <p>In addition to capacity-development efforts focusing on open local government and deliberative democracy, the project will aim to increase the knowledge of municipal officials (elected representatives and civil servants) on the protection and promotion of human rights at the local level, in close co-operation with the Ombudsperson Institution. Capacity development will also be complemented with expert guidance and peer exchanges among selected municipalities and relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>These convergent lines of action aim to pave the way for the implementation of novel initiatives co-designed by selected municipalities to promote transparency, accountability and public participation at the local level, including through the piloting of a first citizens’ assembly.</p>
Main partners	Ministry of Local Government Administration, Local Authorities, Association of Municipalities, Ombudsperson Institution (OIK)
Duration	24 months (01/10/2026 – 30/09/2028)
Type of project	Bilateral

Funding	€700,000
Relevant MAE	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

6.3. Education

Activity PMM2938	6.3.1. BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INCLUSION IN EDUCATION – INCLUDE II (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Many children continue to be confronted with numerous barriers to access education. This includes children with special educational needs as well as Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children.</p> <p>In recent years, numerous efforts have been undertaken by the donor community to support authorities in ensuring equitable access to inclusive quality education for all vulnerable groups. This has led to positive developments at policy level, with the adoption of two dedicated Strategies, specifically addressing the inclusion in education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and of boys and girls with special educational needs: the Education Strategic Plan and its Action Plan 2022-2026 and Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities 2022-2026.</p> <p>Against this backdrop, recent reports note that access to education is no longer a systematic challenge for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. However, limited access to early childhood education remains worrying, as well as observed significant risks of drop-out of compulsory education, low achievement and low access to higher levels of education. Approximately 38.000 children with disabilities are out of school. Capacity building for educators and municipal professions remains inadequate despite some progress. Learning Centres and scholarship schemes playing a vital role in supporting these communities face sustainability challenges due to limited funding.</p> <p>Building on the results achieved under the European Union / Council of Europe Programme “Building capacity for inclusion in education – INCLUDE” (2020-2023), the aim of the present project is for children with special educational needs as well as for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian girls and boys to have equitable access to quality pre-primary, primary and secondary education through strengthened education policies and school and community-based support, in line with the Beneficiary’s strategic priorities and European standards. To this end, the project focuses on the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education policymaking is strengthened, enabling improved enrolment, retention, and attainment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children and of those with special educational needs in pre-primary, primary and secondary education; - Educators, schools, and school communities ensure welcoming and conducive learning environments and equitable access to education for all children, including those from vulnerable groups; - Equality of access to digital technology (platforms, devices, tools, and resources) for all learners in schools, libraries, and public institutions is ensured to fill the learning gaps in or outside of schools; - Pupils attain the necessary digital skills and competences surrounding democratic culture to be able to reap the benefits and protect themselves from harm. <p>In this context, INCLUDE II integrates Digital Citizenship Education (DCE) based on Council of Europe standards to empower children with critical</p>

	digital competences, promote online safety, and foster responsible participation in digital society.
Main partners	MESTI; Municipal Education Directorates; Municipal Offices for Communities and Return; Regional Resource Centres; Learning Centres; Civil Society Organisations;
Duration	48 months
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme €3 334 000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM4426	6.3.2. BUILDING RESILIENCE AND ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE IN EDUCATION (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Violence and bullying, including cyberbullying, remain significant challenges in schools, undermining students' well-being, academic performance, and sense of belonging. These behaviours often stem from a lack of awareness about diversity and respect, as well as from the absence or poor implementation of mechanisms to address effectively these issues. Concurrently, the growing use of digital technologies has made it easier to target victims and rally peers, contributing to a rise in cyberbullying thereby intensifying peer violence.</p> <p>Ensuring healthy, safe, and appropriate learning environments based on quality education standards is the fourth strategic objective of the Pre-University Education component of the Education Strategy and its Action Plan 2022-2026. Despite some sporadic efforts by the donor community and CSOs, many schools still lack the appropriate policies, capacity, tools, and coordinated mechanisms needed to effectively prevent and respond to incidents when they occur.</p> <p>In this context, the Strategy outlines the planning and implementation of actions aimed at preventing and reporting all forms of violence, including physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, neglect, sexual harassment, exploitation, homophobia, bullying, hate speech, and extremism in schools.</p> <p>The project will also contribute to the new Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030 "Learners First – Education for Today's and Tomorrow's Democratic Societies", adopted at the 26th Session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Education Ministers on 28-29 September 2023 in Strasbourg. Two of the pillars of the Strategy focus on the renewal of the democratic and civic mission of education and enhancing the social responsibility and responsiveness of education.</p> <p>The aim of the proposed project is to support and equip the education authorities and schools, including its communities with tools to prevent and respond to all forms of violence in schools, including bullying and cyberbullying. It provides not only concrete mechanisms but also promotes courage, resilience and mutual respect, helping students to stand up for themselves and others while fostering safe and inclusive learning and growth environments, in line with the Beneficiary's strategic priorities and European standards. To this end, the project focuses on the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacities of education authorities and school professionals to prevent and apply zero tolerance to violence, bullying including cyberbullying are strengthened through enhanced mechanisms, tools and knowledge; - Education stakeholders at central and municipal levels including schools and CSOs have enhanced co-ordination and co-operation to ensure

	<p>systemic responses at policy and practice levels pertaining to safety at schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness and engagement of students, parents and communities on understanding and addressing harmful effects of violence in schools, including bullying and cyberbullying, including encouraging positive behaviour and community involvement in creating safe schools are increased; <p>In this context, the project integrates Council of Europe standards and tools to empower all actors in education with tools and competencies to prevent and address violence, bullying and cyberbullying in schools and promote safe learning and growth environments for students.</p>
Main partners	MESTI; Municipal Education Directorates; Schools; Learning Centres; Civil Society Organisations;
Duration	24 months
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€800 000 (TBD)
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

Activity PMM 4427	6.3.3. ENHANCING QUALITY, INTEGRITY, INCLUSION AND TRANSPARENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Higher Education plays a crucial role in shaping democracies, as well as inclusive and knowledge-based societies. However, challenges related to integrity, ethics, and equality continue to affect the fairness and credibility of the higher education system. The absence of comprehensive legislation on academic integrity, limited mechanisms for protection of students' rights and insufficient implementation of inclusion and non-discrimination policies hinder transparency and equal opportunities.</p> <p>Improving the quality, integrity, and competitiveness of higher education is the primary objective of the Higher Education component of the Education Strategy and its Action Plan 2022-2026.</p> <p>This objective was formulated in response to structural shortcomings in the field of higher education and aims to improve the quality and integrity of higher education, through the implementation of the accreditation process in accordance with international quality standards.</p> <p>During 2025, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency regained full membership in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), marking an important international recognition of its efforts to meet European quality standards and one of the key priorities of the Strategy. Furthermore, the Strategy seeks to advance higher education reform by strengthening the legal framework, building the capacity of quality assurance mechanisms, increasing participation in international programs, and improving academic and research infrastructure.</p> <p>The proposed project contributes directly towards fulfilment of the priorities of the Council of Europe Education Strategy 2025-2030 Learners First, specifically its Pillar 2 "Enhancing the Social Responsibility and Responsiveness of Education". Building on the results achieved under the joint European Union/Council of Europe Action in Education under the Horizontal Facility I for Western Balkans and Türkiye "Strengthen Integrity and Combat Corruption in Higher Education" (2016-2018), the project aims to address these challenges by assisting the education authorities and public universities to enhance and adequately implement safeguards for academic integrity, non-discrimination and student rights in higher education, in line</p>

	<p>with the Beneficiary's strategic priorities and European standards. To this end, the project focuses on the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal and regulatory frameworks for academic integrity are strengthened and new comprehensive related legislation is developed; - Supporting internal and external quality assurance - Effective mechanisms for promoting students' rights are established and implemented including regulations for establishing the Ombudsperson for students, a new body foreseen in the new statute of the University of Pristina; - Non-discrimination and inclusion in higher education are ensured through strengthened policies and practices. <p>In this context, the project works towards integrity and inclusion in higher education based on the Council of Europe standards and in line with the mission of the platform for Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED).</p>
Main partners	MESTI; Public Universities; Kosovo Accreditation Agency; Civil Society Organisations
Duration	24 months
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€800 000 (TBD)
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

6.4. Youth

Activity PMM 4221	6.4.1. STRENGTHENING YOUTH POLICY AND YOUTH WORK (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>The project aims to support young people's access to rights by advancing democratic citizenship and human rights education, fostering youth participation in decision-making processes, and strengthening youth civil society and youth centres as platforms of civic engagement and democratic participation. It thereby echoes the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy which emphasise that ensuring a democratic future for all requires investment in the participation of young people in democratic life and decision-making processes, including through education about human rights and core democratic values.</p> <p>The project also engages youth stakeholders in the dissemination and implementation of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (under revision) and relevant European standards</p>
Main partners	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Youth councils, Youth centres, Youth workers, Youth Civil Society Organisations
Duration	01/01/2026 – 31/12/2027 (24 months)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€600,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII)

6.5 Democratic governance and dialogue, civil society

Activity PMM 4216	6.5.1. BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORTING RECONCILIATION BASED ON COUNCIL OF EUROPE STANDARDS (PROPOSED)
Purpose	<p>Inter-communal tensions remain significant and continue to impact social cohesion. In particular, the situation remains fragile in the four northern Serb-majority municipalities, as noted by the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), and the European Commission. Wider political developments, as well as parallel education systems, contribute to ethnic segregation, further affecting the effective functioning of democratic and judicial institutions necessary for the protection of human rights, and hindering the development of a peaceful and inclusive society.</p> <p>Encouragingly, the 2023 Opinion of the Advisory Committee of the FCNM also noted increasing social and institutional interactions between communities in some municipalities.</p> <p>The present project builds on this openness on the part of members of different communities to direct pragmatic engagement on matters of mutual interest. It aims to foster trust and reconciliation by providing opportunities for dialogue, people-to-people contacts and co-operation, thereby facilitating the establishment of sustainable networks, beyond the lifetime of the project. The ultimate ambition of the project is to contribute to a positive atmosphere in which broader and locally-owned reconciliation and dialogue initiatives can flourish.</p> <p>Accordingly, project activities are structured around four main components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting co-operation between journalists and media organisations to foster collaboration at both individual and organisational levels; - Raising awareness of shared cultural heritage by engaging local historians, academics, educational professionals (outside formal education systems), civil society organisations, and local public representatives to create spaces for constructive dialogue on cultural heritage, aiming to develop an inclusive approach to the management of cultural heritage and memorialisation of the past; - Fostering organisational collaboration between non-governmental organisations from different communities, supporting their co-operation on issues of mutual interest; - Empowering youth leaders for reconciliation by supporting young activists from different communities, grounded in the experience and methodology of the Council of Europe annual Youth Peace Camp. The priorities for this group will be self-identified within an overall framework of Council of Europe advice and assistance, with a focus on trust-building and reconciliation.
Main partners	Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK); Local authorities; Local public representatives; youth leaders and activists, youth councils, youth workers; Civil Society Organisations; Office of Community Affairs.
Duration	01/01/2026 – 31/12/2027 (24 months)
Type of project	Bilateral
Funding	€650,000
Relevant MAE	Directorate of Political Affairs and External Relations (DPAER)



**Council of Europe
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination**

Avenue de l'Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
E-mail: dpc@coe.int
www.coe.int/programmes

**Council of Europe
Office in Pristina**

17/18 Bedri Pejani street
10000 Pristina
Tel: + 38338407750/51
E-mail: coe.pristina@coe.int
www.coe.int/pristina

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.