



# ANNUAL REPORT 2014



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A photograph of Jeta Xharra, Executive Director, speaking at a podium. She is a woman with shoulder-length brown hair, wearing a grey blazer over a blue top. She is holding a microphone and looking towards the audience. The background is dark with some blurred figures of people.

JETA XHARRA  
Executive Director

Jeta Xharra is a renowned journalist in Kosovo and the Balkans, hosting the award-winning current-affairs TV programme, *Life in Kosovo*.

**In 2013 I noted that the biggest effect of civic activism in Kosovo was the citizens' desire for change which resulted in them voting to change 50% of all mayors in the 2013 local elections.**

In 2013 I noted that the biggest effect of civic activism in Kosovo was the citizens' desire for change which resulted in them voting to change 50% of all mayors in the 2013 local elections.

This ability of Kosovo citizens to successfully change things was present in at least two accounts in 2014: the ousting of the rector of University of Prishtina, who resigned amid heavy protests and pressure after revelations of his falsified academic credentials, as well as the push of the local civil society in Prizren to change the authorities' decision to demolish the oldest public cinema. The theater is heavily used during the popular documentary festival Dokufest but the municipal government had wanted to privatise it in order to build a shopping centre.

That is why I am glad that in the eco-system of islands of people who are getting together to push for democratic changes in Kosovo, BIRN and Internews Kosova with whom we work with most closely, are not completely lonely organisms.

The eighty-four people who worked with BIRN in 2014 have become part of a bigger picture that represents the "fury" - the phrase coined well by a Prishtina Insight front page this year - which describes the emotion that Kosovo citizens are expressing against a compromised and false elite running a lot of the institutions.

#### **EDUCATION**

It is not a coincidence that in January "Life in Kosovo" started the year with a report that listed a series of false scientific publications that had given University of Prishtina professors their academic titles and ended the year in a heated debate which highlighted the public support that the new rector had in order to enforce a controversial decision. His reforms stopped the admission of war veterans and their children from being automatically registered in the University without going through the standard entry exam, which met with some controversy.





We contributed to this drive for more qualitative education by becoming the first non-governmental groups in Kosovo to monitor Matura Exam, which assesses achievement in high school. The test is held all over the country – another of those exams that affect NUMBER of students but has been ridden with allegations of cheating and administrative discrepancies in the past.

This model of civil society monitoring which we have been applying since 2007 in elections, courts and municipal services has been expanded this year to include two other fields – public procurement and the monitoring of the implementation of agreements signed between Kosovo and Serbia.

### TENDERS

The public procurement monitoring has allowed us to delve into analysing hundreds of public contracts, and considering that in Kosovo the state remains the biggest employer, following this money has led us to several ground-breaking investigations. One, published by Gazeta Jeta ne Kosove about the Kosovo Electric Company, KEK. We revealed that a lucrative contract was being given to a Russian oligarch without following the right tendering procedures. Our revelations of this in public caused the annulment of the tender.

Also in the field of energy, “Life in Kosovo” revealed a big scam: electric meters were being manipulated to falsely measure the electricity spent by Kosovo households. These kinds of revelations with huge public interest, which are a tremendous portion of each household’s expenditures, were being completely under-reported in other media because energy companies are considered to be key advertisers in the media.

### BIG DEAL

Considering how much influence the international community has in Kosovo, this year we decided to devise a particular initiative called BIG DEAL which aims to provide more scrutiny into the internationally-mediated agreements signed between Prishtina and Belgrade since 2011 under the pretext that they should improve citizen’s lives. In cooperation with civil society of Serbia, we published the first BIG DEAL think tank report in November which brought the representatives of both Kosovo and Serbia to the table for the first time in a post-independent history of Kosovo and revealed that only 4 out of 16 agreements signed since 2011 have

been implemented. Since BIG DEAL has been launched it has become a platform where other NGOs raise concerns to the EU, Kosovo and Serbia representatives about the issues of the agreements that are affecting their lives.

### JUSTICE IN KOSOVO

Keeping true to its roots, the “Justice in Kosovo” team has this year broadcasted a program on one of the riskiest topics to investigate for journalists in Kosovo. This program revealed how Kosovo’s businessman Rrustem Rukolli, who amassed his wealth by winning one of the biggest public tenders in Kosovo while Hashim Thaci was prime minister, was also the illegal squatter of one of the most lucrative public spaces in Prishtina, which he turned into a nightclub. Rukolli, the same businessmen who won the most tenders during PDK’s government is also leading the legal defense of Sami Lushtaku, the PDK mayor of Skenderaj who is accused of war crimes. “Justice in Kosovo” found that the local owner of this public space was struggling to get his property back because all the Kosovo law enforcement bodies were impotent at helping him as the investor to get back into his squatted property because of Rukolli’s political connections.

### ELECTORAL DEBATES

BIRN’s biggest impact this year was undoubtedly its series of 9 parliamentary debates during the 2014 general elections which were watched by 719,153 people on Youtube alone. A similar viewership is estimated for those who watched the debates during their TV broadcasts. The parliamentary debates were separated each night by different topics. They were unique compared to other media because ours were the only debates to include a live audience in the hall to pose questions. We were also the only ones to include questions from social media while the debates were happening and presented political party programs with a crew of three people from each party (rather than one person) in order to present the voters with as many parliamentary candidates as possible for the short 10 day campaign that was held this year.

### EPILOGUE

Again, this amount of work is only made possible because of an incredibly motivated and energetic body of people who I am blessed to be working with and I thank each one of them for making this success possible.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2010/12/kosovos\\_election](http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2010/12/kosovos_election)



# board members

## BIRN REGIONAL

**Ana Petruševa**  
Country Director, Macedonia

**Per Byman**  
Secretary-General, Radiohjärpen, Sweden

**Steve Crawshaw**  
Secretary General, Amnesty International

**Tim Judah**  
Journalist, The Economist

**Wolfgang Petritsch**  
Chair, Board of the European Cultural Foundation

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Managing Partner MDA

**Astrit Istrefi**  
Team Leader, Saferworld

**Zana Limani**  
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## BIRN Kosovo's mission

As an independent, non-governmental organization, BIRN Kosovo exists to provide momentum to the democratic transition in Kosovo by promoting accountability, rule of law and policy reform.

## BIRN Kosovo's vision

After starting with fewer than five staff members, BIRN Kosovo has since evolved into a comprehensive media organization, employing journalists and editorial, administrative and technical staff in the production of high-quality investigative and analytical reporting.

BIRN Kosovo now fields a team of around 70 full-time professionals as well as 16 local and international contributors that work in the development and implementation of on-going programs.

As an independent, non-governmental organization, BIRN Kosovo exists to provide momentum to the democratic transition process, promoting accountability, rule of law and policy reform.

BIRN Kosovo's approach is to combine its projects with those of the regional BIRN Network with a view to long-term sustainability of results and institutions

BIRN Kosovo in particular aims to be the watchdog of public institutions, supporting their reform and their path towards meeting the criteria and standards of the European Union

In addition, through the production of fair, balanced and accurate TV debates and training of youth on argumentation and debating skills, BIRN aims to promote and encourage a culture of debate in Kosovo.

BIRN's vision is to secure its position as the premier Kosovo investigative and analytical journalism organization, addressing the need for objective, quality, sustainable reporting on the country's many challenges in the arena of politics, economics and EU integration.



BIRN KOSOVO

# Method and Approach

## Journalism that acts as a watchdog

All of BIRN Kosovo's outputs have an underlying objective in common – keeping the powerful accountable. Whether we do this with hard-hitting interviews, argumentative highly watched TV debates, detailed online and printed investigations based on documents that unveil corruption or facing leaders with their own promises systematically year after year, our philosophy is to build a culture of media oversight in Kosovo using methods of investigative and watchdog journalism.

## Journalism that operates in the field

BIRN Kosovo's 65 staff and contributors are drawn from the most experienced investigative journalists, civil society activists, researchers and professional court monitors that are spread out throughout all Kosovo municipalities. Our court and public services monitors and journalists cover 27 Kosovo towns. BIRN is the only media outlet in Kosovo that does municipal and electoral debates systematically by leaving Prishtina and reporting from 35 Kosovo towns, offering the public the opportunity to pose questions to their leaders. Emails, phone calls and daily walk-in visits from citizens are powerful sources of information, on which most investigations are based. It is our belief that the best way to tell the story and offer accurate, balanced and fair information is to be as close to the people who are affected by that story as possible.

## Journalism that is engaged and affects change

A good journalist does not simply report what happens today; a good journalist fights for a better tomorrow. We believe it is not enough to report on corruption or vote rigging if other institutions do not take action after our reporting. Frustrated by the indifference and

impotence of local institutions to do something about matters we report, we have formed a team of legal professionals who file cases to the prosecution, cases armed with evidence that we have collected through our investigative reporters and court monitors in the field. In this we have built alliances with professionals in Kosovo institutions who share our vision about improving life in Kosovo as a whole. Our staff is also trained to act as monitors during elections. This is all part of a philosophy that goes beyond bare reporting, what we have called engaged journalism that shapes the public opinion about the kind of nation we want Kosovo to become. BIRN affects change through the high credibility of its media outlets, which reached about 400,000 viewers per TV broadcast and more than 1.4 million visitors to gazetajnk.com, BIRN's investigative online portal. BIRN Kosovo's methods of professional reporting, debate and in-depth analysis are envisaged to create change in society without harming the accuracy, fairness and the balance of the story.

## Journalism that trains for excellence

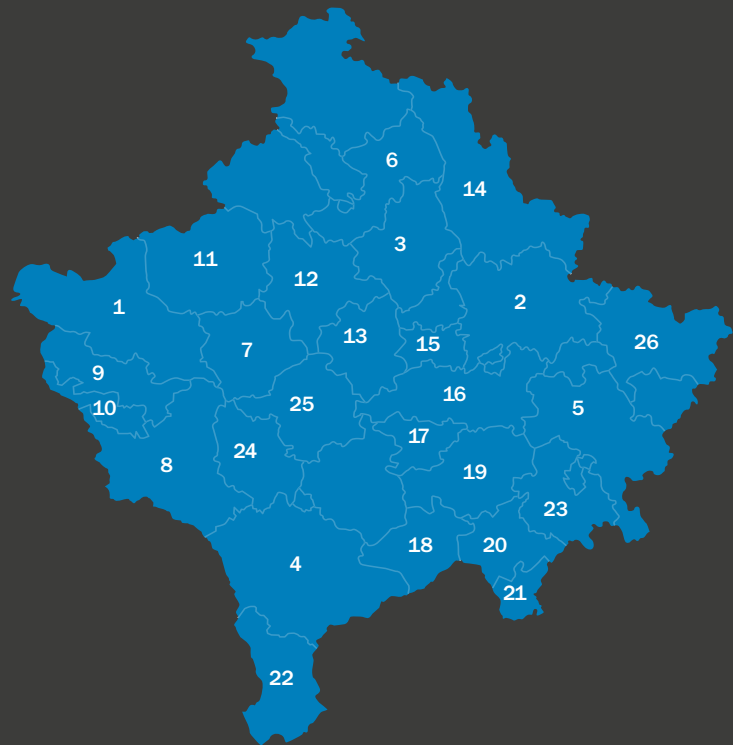
Since it was set up in 2005, BIRN Kosovo, in close partnership with InternewsKosova and BIRN Hub, has trained more than 350 journalists, court monitors and researchers of over 20 different media and different ethnicities living in Kosovo. This is done through on-the-job training and formal workshops, in news and investigative reporting, TV production skills, document based research and training for court and public service monitoring. Building capacities of media to deliver professional journalism remains an absolute necessity in Kosovo, which has the youngest population in Europe but also the least educated one. BIRN Kosovo acts as a hub for innovation, creativity and quality journalism – thus having established its position as a trendsetter in Kosovo media.



## BIRN KOSOVO

## Operations

Location covered by Monitors of Court and  
Municipal Services



- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1 Peja<br>(Basic Court, Court of Appeals and<br>Municipal services))  | 10 Junik<br>(Municipal services))                               | 19 Ferizaj<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)   |
| 2 Prishtinë<br>(Basic Court, Supreme Court and<br>Municipal services) | 11 Istog<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)      | 20 Kacanik<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)   |
| 3 Vushtrri<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)          | 12 Skenderaj<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)  | 21 H. Elez<br>(Municipal services)                             |
| 4 Prizren<br>(Basic Court and Municipal<br>services)                  | 13 Drenas<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)     | 22 Dragash<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services))  |
| 5 Gjiilan<br>(Basic Court and Municipal<br>services)                  | 14 Podujeve<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)   | 23 Viti<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)      |
| 6 Mitrovicë<br>(Basic Court and Municipal<br>services)                | 15 Fushë Kosovë<br>(Municipal services branch)                  | 24 Rahovec<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)   |
| 7 Kline<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)             | 16 Lipjan<br>(Municipal Court branch and<br>Municipal services) | 25 Malisheve<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services) |
| 8 Gjakove<br>(Basic Court and Municipal<br>services)                  | 17 Shtime<br>(Municipal services)                               | 26 Kamenica<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)  |
| 9 Decan<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)             | 18 Shterpce<br>(Basic Court branch and Municipal<br>services)   |  |



## BIRN KOSOVO

# Map of operations

## Media Production: investigative reporting, analysis and debate

### TV: Jeta në Kosovë / Life in Kosovo and Drejtësia në Kosovë / Justice in Kosovo

The "Life in Kosovo" program had several highlights, including debates about the water taxes that the water companies have always had to pay to the Ministry of Environment. The show influenced the decision to suspend Naser Bajraktari, the director of the water department in the Ministry of Environment. Life in Kosovo also reported on the allegations against top management of the University of Prishtina. Following the show and the protest the Rector Ibrahim Gashi resigned.

The EULEX scandal alleging corruption within the ranks of EU's Rule of Law mission rocked Kosovo: and Life in Kosovo was the only show to interview all of the relevant interlocutors at once.

An investigation into the lack of institutional respect for the rights of children with disabilities won the NGO Coalition for Protecting Children's award for best reporting TV program for children's rights.

- On February 7, 2014, the crew of "Life in Kosovo" visited the northern part of Mitrovica to do an in depth show following the arrest of Oliver Ivanovic, a leading Kosovo Serb politician, for alleged crimes committed during the war. This investigative report showcased the stories of people who witnessed the crimes that occurred in northern Kosovo.

- In June, "Life in Kosovo" discovered a huge scam with electric meters that were purchased to measure how much energy was spent in household and calculate payment. The public company KOSTT announced the winner of the bid for electricity meters to be the consortium Caraglio & Electra, which offered the price of 1.9 million. But ultimately another company, Monten & G3, was awarded the tender at a higher price, 2.3 million euro, on the grounds that it had a technically superior offer. This came after Monten contested the original award to Caraglio.

Life in Kosovo discussed this issue during the debate with an official from KOSST, a representative of the company Electra, and a representative of the Procurement Review Body. Months later, this led to prosecution opening an official investigation in the case.

- On December 11th, Life in Kosovo broadcasted an investigation into the heart stands scandal which revealed the fraud among doctors convincing patients to undergo unnecessary heart stand implants into patients in order for private hospitals to benefit from it. The program featured exclusive interviews with patients who talked for the first time in public about the financial, physical and traumatic experience survived under the hand of these fraudulent doctors. The investigation also featured excerpts of communication between doctors, showing how the network of transferring patients from public hospital to private healthcare providers operated. An exclusive interview with Besim Kelmendi, the special prosecutor of the case was also broadcast.

### WEB: GazetaJnK, Kosovo contribution to Balkan Insight and Balkan Transitional Justice

*Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë* (Life in Kosovo Newspaper) is BIRN Kosovo's fastest-growing product. In October 2014, Nektar Zogiani and Tinka Kurti from *Gazeta JnK* won first place in the category of online media in the competition for investigative journalist in the poverty field, organized by UNKT, and monitored by Kosovo Journalists Association. Kaltrina Rexhepi was awarded by Kosovo Journalists Association in the category of "Best Cultural Article" for her story "Irregular business burden to inheritance" published in June 2014. The Kosovo Journalists Association and UNDP in December awarded *Gazeta JnK* for the article "Negotiated Million" in the category of best online media article against corruption.n.

BIRN Kosovo is part of the regional team that produces *Balkan Insight* and *Balkan Transitional Justice*, the leading regional online source of news and in-depth analysis, with the latter having a particular focus on war crimes trials. In 2014, two regional investigations were produced with the collaboration of all participating countries. The first, "World War I History Divides Balkan Schoolchildren," focus on discrepancies in regional history books. A second investigation, "Arkan's Paramilitaries: Tigers Who Escaped Justice," looked at alleged perpetrators in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo, who were never put on trial.

### PRINT: Prishtina Insight

2014 was an ambitious and challenging year for Prishtina Insight. With the new format and design adopted the previous August, PI increased its focus on unforgettable long-form journalism,

building each edition around a cover story. These stories spanned from human interest – such as the experience of Ukraine's Albanian minority – to investigations such as the allegations of corruption at the EU's rule of law mission, EULEX. The stories were paired with eye-catching graphic design and stunning photography.

### BIG DEAL: Monitoring the implementation of the Kosovo-Serbia Agreements

Since 2011, Kosovo and Serbia have held negotiations on freedom of movement, mutual recognition of diplomas, telecommunications and energy, and more. A high-level agreement between the two prime ministers, signed 19 April 2013, provides for the effective inclusion of Serbian-majority northern Kosovo under Prishtina's control. BIRN Kosovo partnered with an organization in Serbia to monitor the level of implementation of each of the agreements to see how it affected ordinary citizens. The results were published in stories throughout the year and collected in a comprehensive report, published in November, one and a half years after the so-called historic high-level agreement. Negotiators from both Kosovo and Serbia were present for the launch in Prishtina, as well as 120 stakeholders.

### Monitoring & Advocacy

BIRN monitored public services, supported by the work of 14 monitors covering nearly every municipality. The addition of public services represented a continued expansion of BIRN's monitoring, which also includes the justice system and public procurement. During 2014, BIRN actively monitored 501 planned hearings.

### Training and media development

BIBIRN and its partners, Internews Kosova and BIRN HUB have trained more than 350 journalists, court monitors, technical staff and researchers coming from different backgrounds living in Kosovo. This hands-on training builds capacities to deliver professional journalism in a place that the youngest population in Europe and a struggling education system. The trainings offered included rights and responsibilities of journalists, protection of sources, use of social media, compiling public information requests, monitoring public procurement and understanding public contracts, alongside an active mentorship program for the newly hired staff.





MEDIA PRODUCTION

# TV Production

“Life in Kosovo”/ “Jeta në Kosovë(JnK)”  
Current Affairs Programme

(2005 to date)

BIRN Kosovo's flagship television programme, “Life in Kosovo” focuses on current affairs in Kosovo's economic, education, social and political realms.



**JANUARY**

2014

- On January 23rd, Life in Kosovo discussed the draft law for sponsoring and donations in the field of Culture, Youth and Sports. BIRN also transmitted a documentary produced by the Forum for Civic Initiatives about the importance of philanthropy.
- During January 2014, Jeta ne Kosove was among the outlets in Kosovo reporting about a large number of scientific papers by the faculty of the University of Prishtina published in scholastically questionable journals abroad. The media reported that the rector of the university, Ibrahim Gashi, among many other professors, was himself involved in fraudulent publications. Following this, students of the UP protested ceaselessly in front of the university premises asking for the resignation of the rector Ibrahim Gashi.

**FEBRUARY**

2014

- On February 7, 2014, the crew of "Life in Kosovo" visited northern Mitrovica to do an in depth show following the arrest of Oliver Ivanovic, a leading Kosovo Serb politician, for alleged crimes committed during the war. This investigative report showcased the stories of people who witnessed the crimes that occurred in northern Kosovo.
- On February 7th, Life in Kosovo debated the lack of water in Prishtina with the Mayor of Prishtina, Shpend Ahmeti, and other representatives from the government and water companies.
- On February 13<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed the future of the Special Prosecution





## MARCH

2014

- On March 13<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo debated whether the pending elections would take place under a new law on elections or not.
- On March 20, 2014, BIRN discussed on political morality of the mayor of Prizren, Ramadan Muja, who was sentenced to two months imprisonment on accusations that he illegally gave out municipal properties.
- On March 27<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed the municipalities' debt. Left over from overspending of previous mayors in Peja, Ferizaj, Gjakova, Lipjan, Gjiilan, Viti and Novobërdë are among the municipalities that have a debt to the government worth millions. *ë kryetarëve të kaluar në komuna si Peja, Ferizaj, Gjakova, Lipjan, Gjiilan, Viti dhe Novobërdë.*

## ARIL

2014

- On April 10<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo had a TEMA TV bridge debate between Belgrade and Prishtina discussing the overarching media prejudice of the coverage of Albanians and Serbs in each other's media.
- On April 17<sup>th</sup>, the program returned to the issue of the University of Prishtina once again, debating with the new acting rector, Anton Berishaj about the needed reforms in Prishtina University.
- On April 24<sup>th</sup>, the last show of the month debated the proliferation of civil society organizations that seem to have turned into political societies.



## MAY

2014

- On May 1<sup>st</sup>, Life in Kosovo debated with experts the “Development Fund,” an idea started by the Minister of Finances, Besim Beqaj, to create new jobs and support economical projects. Minister of Finances, Besim Beqaj cancelled his attendance in the debate two minutes before it started. However a few days prior, he said that the fund would be dedicated to creating new jobs and generate economic development. However, he did not provide any other functional details or elaborate on what requirements exist for application.
- On May 8<sup>th</sup>, the show reported on why regional waste management company “Pastrimi” was forbidden from throwing away waste in the Mirash dump, thus creating a crisis in waste-management.
- On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the final show of the month focused on the latest developments in the criminal proceedings against the so-called “Drenica Group.”

## JUNE

2014

- On June 13<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo started discussing the agreement signed by three parties in Kosovo to not form a coalition with PDK and what it meant for democracy in the young country.



## JULY

2014

- On July 18<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo debated the subject of the struggles of a functional Assembly due to months of blockade in forming a government.
- On July 24<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo debated who has the right to serve as the Head of the Assembly with analysts and experts.
- On July 31<sup>st</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed public procurement with Florina Ujupi, the BIRN public procurement monitor who has spent a year analysing hundreds of procurement contracts in Kosovo public finance system.

## AUGUST

2014

- On August 7<sup>th</sup>, Activists, analysts and journalists from Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Yemen and Bangladesh were guests in the programme discussing what had worked and what didn't in civil society's efforts to combat corruption and enforce rule of law in their societies.
- On August 21<sup>st</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed the impact of diaspora community in the economic, social and cultural landscape of Kosovo.
- On August 28<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed the formation of Kosovo's Assembly and the Constitutional Court's decision to not accept Isa Mustafa's election as Head of the Assembly.



## SEPTEMBER

2014

- On September 4<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed the state Matura exam. BIRN Kosovo this year for the first time monitored the State Matura Exam in June and September. BIRN staff were placed as monitors in schools around Kosovo. On September 4, 2014, Life in Kosovo held a debate on the process of Matura exam, discussing the findings of the monitors and problems/irregularities during the process. The Ministry of Education thanked BIRN for the findings and recommendations and promised that next year they will work on the weaknesses highlighted by the BIRN & Internews Kosova report.
- On September 18<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo debated Fejzullah Hasani, head of Supreme Court, Besim Kelmendi, Special Prosecutor, Arber Vllahiu, spokesperson for the President of Kosovo who runs the Anti-Corruption National Council about the court decision to for non-jail punishment for a landmark case which saw several judges headed by Nuhi Uka, former head of court for illegal property transactions that have costed millions to Kosovo budget.
- On September 25<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed the controversial increase in energy prices despite the fact that the country has no Assembly and no Government.

## OCTOBER

2014

- On October 10, 2014, Life in Kosovo held a debate on the process of reappointment of the three international judges to Kosovo's Constitutional Court. After a thorough investigation, the JnK team uncovered a memo drafted by EULEX's legal team to their colleagues in Brussels. The correspondence showed that EULEX's legal officers convinced the president Atifete Jahjaga's staff to give them a new mandate without taking the issue before the parliament and without making the formal oath in front of the President - as it was done for local judges of the constitutional court. This raised the issue about there being double standards for locals and internationals members of the constitutional court.
- On October 16 In June, "Life in Kosovo" discovered a huge scam with electric meters that were purchased to measure how much energy was spent in households to calculate energy bill. The public company KOSTT announced the winner of the bid for electricity meters to be the consortium Caraglio & Electra, which offered the price of 1.9 million. But ultimately another company, Monten & G3, was awarded the tender at a higher price, 2.3 million euro, on the grounds that it had a technically superior offer. This came after Monten contested the original award to Caraglio. Months later, this led to prosecution opening an official investigation in an ongoing case which affects public interest at large.
- On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed the local community's battle for Prizren's "Lumbardhi" cinema where the best regional film festival Dokufest is held and government attempts to privatize it by first destroying it.
- On October 30<sup>th</sup>, Jeta ne Kosove covered the story of Maria Bamieh, the special prosecutor that came out in the public accusing EULEX of failing to investigate a corruption case of another judge that she reported inside EULEX two years ago. The programme traced down the families of the convicted that claimed to have paid money to an EULEX judge in order to get a man released from a murder charge. BIRN was the only media in Kosov to have covered this story from all angles.



**NOVEMBER**

2014

- On November 6<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo spoke to analysts about the controversial message that U.S. Ambassador Tracey Jacobson delivered during the continuing political crisis. The second part of the show contained an exclusive interview with Ulrike Lunacek, vice-president of the European Parliament.
- Another show examined the clash between the new Rector of the University of Prishtina, Ramadan Zejnullahu and students of the war veterans who expected to be accepted to the University without having to go through the entry exam. This had been a practice until this rector came along and started applying higher standards for students and professors in the University.
- On November 20<sup>th</sup> Life in Kosovo debated the collapse of the coalition between LDK-VV-AAK-NISMA, and examined the new coalition between PDK and LDK.

**DECEMBER**

2014

- On December 4<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed the ongoing saga on the appointment of the University of Prishtina Rector and the threats from the war veterans camp for not allowing them the automatic registration into University.
- On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo broadcasted an investigation into the heart stands scandal which revealed the fraud among doctors convincing patients to undergo unnecessary heart stand implants into patients in order for private hospitals to benefit from it. The program featured exclusive interviews with patients who talked for the first time in public about the financial, physical and traumatic experience survived under the hand of these fraudulent doctors. The investigation also featured excerpts of communication between doctors, showing how the network of transferring patients from public hospital to private healthcare providers operated. An exclusive interview with Besim Kelmendi, the special prosecutor of the case was also broadcast.
- On December 18<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo discussed the scandal of "HIB petrol" with Prishtina Mayor Shpend Ahmeti, looking into the allegedly carcinogenic toxins in this petrol, which is the main supplying petrol that heats middle schools.
- For its final show of the year on December 25<sup>th</sup>, Life in Kosovo summarized all of the most important events of 2014.



## FAST FACTS

2014

*Frequency:*  
**Weekly –Thursdays 8p.m**

*Current Affairs Debates:* **34**

*Interviews:* **10**

*Investigative reports:* **9**

*Views on Youtube:*  
**719,153**

*Minutes watched:*  
**4,768,175**

*Facebook page:*  
**14,565 fansa**

## Parliamentary Electoral Debates

Kosovo held general elections on June 8, 2014. During the ten-day campaign, BIRN's parliamentary debates were, according to ratings, the most watched election debates among all TV channels. What differed these debates from all others was the fact that they:

- a. included an audience present in the halls while the debates were happening
- b. presented teams of three candidates from each party that was going to address a particular problems (so more MPs got a chance to present themselves during one debate compared to debates in other TV channels)
- c. presented graphics and statistics about each matter to set the picture of the problem that was being discussed
- d. used of social media during the debates was the largest than ever before in any broadcast media
- e. the debates were being streamed online every night, so a large Kosovo diaspora living abroad could also tune in

The series, which we called “#DebatePernime” (in English “#DebateForReal”), created space for citizens to better understand the programs offered by political parties and audiences engaged with tweets, FB comments and questions during the debate.

The day after each debate, an online follow-up debate with independent experts and analysts was organized, with the purpose of evaluating

whether or not the platforms of the parties were applicable and feasible in real life. These debate sessions were named #AkeDebatPernime? or “#WasItaRealDebate?”

- 29 May 2014 #DebateForReal on the Education System—The issues that were tackled through this debate include the most challenging aspects of education and issues such as corruption in the education system, poor quality of education, teachers' payment, the State Matura Exam, Accreditation Agency, etc.
- 30 May 2014 #DebateforReal on Environment and Energy - The main issues discussed during this debate were the amount of energy that will be produced from renewable resources, water supply, pollution, gravel royalties and more.
- 31 may 2014 #DebateforReal on Culture and Sports - The main issues discussed in this debate were the promotion and protection of cultural heritage in Kosovo, financial support to internationally successful athletes, etc.
- 1st June 2014 #DebateforReal on International Integration - Issues raised during the debate centered on visa-free travel, accession to the EU, membership in the UN and other international organizations, foreign policy, relations with diaspora, and recognition of Kosovo's independence.
- 2nd June 2014 #DebateforReal on Rule of Law –The discussion focused on how to improve rule of law, anti-corruption efforts, increasing the number of judges and prosecutors, allocating enough

budgetary resources in order to reduce the backlogs of court cases, the creation of the “special chambers” on war crimes, etc.

- 3rd June 2014 #DebateforReal on Economy— Issues ranged from youth unemployment, the potential for the triple-helix concept of tying market needs and higher education curricula, social policies, foreign direct investment, etc.
- 4th June 2014 #DebateforReal on Local Products Development— Discussions focused on the promotion of local products, allocation of budget for stimulating local producers and farmers, technology, information etc. Specific issues raised in this debate included support to farmers, subsidiaries, local production, free trade agreements, protection from dumping etc.
- 5th June 2014 #DebateforReal on Health System: main topics discussed were the health policies that must be updated, the introduction of the health insurance law, its approval and implementation, promotion of public healthcare instead of private clinics etc.
- 6th June 2014 #DebateforReal on Good Governance— The set up for this debate was slightly different. Political parties were not represented by three members, but only by vice- presidents of each party present at the debate. They discussed following issues: the fight against corruption, transparency and accountability of the new governing bodies, appointment of a government spokesperson, etc.





## Justice in Kosovo / Drejtësia në Kosovë (DnK)

BIRN started doing current affairs programming in 2005 through “Life in Kosovo” and after five years, there was a need to follow issues related to rule of law more closely rather than chase the latest news and current affairs topic. Thus “Drejtësia në Kosovë (DnK)” or “Justice in Kosovo” was created to do in-depth investigations on cases of injustice with an aim to press the right institutions to take measures to fix the problems.

“Justice in Kosovo” takes the information from court monitors who cover 27 municipalities in Kosovo and benefits from an agreement with Kosovo Police, which allows the DnK teams to film the police in action.



**Sevdije Morina**

Special Prosecutor

I congratulate you for your professional work and for your correct and honest reporting during these ten years. You were and will be a strong support for citizens of Kosovo. Thank you for the correct reporting for Prosecutorial Council and State Prosecution, when these two institutions were going through rough times.

**JANUARY**

2014

- On January 26, 2014, Justice in Kosovo broadcasted a landmark investigation that looked at the challenges faced by investors in Kosovo. The program told this story through the case of Xhevat Sadrijaj, an Albanian who lives in Switzerland, who bought a property near Grand Hotel Prishtina together with his partners only to be blackmailed by Rustem Rukolli, who was the businessmen to receive a large chunk of construction tenders from Kosovo government while Thaci's PDK was in power. Rukolli, who was an illegal property occupier in this case and had opened a bar and was at the same time running a legal company that defended of Sami Lushaku, the mayor of PDK accused of war crimes. After Justice in Kosovo broadcasted the analysis, the Kosovo Police began an investigation against into the persons that hampered the owner's access to his property.



**FEBRUARY**

2014

- On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Hasan Berisha, a businessman from Gjakova confessed in front of DnK cameras that he had paid 50 thousand euros of ransome money to Skender Sina, a court property surveyor expert, to issue a favorable property decisions for him. Berisha had testified about this to the local prosecution 10 years ago and the prosecution made sure this case sits in their lockers long enough for it to become too old to prosecute. The programme caused alarm amongst the legal institutions and measures were taken after the show was aired. The program was used as testimony in court.
- On February 16<sup>th</sup>, Justice in Kosovo dealt with the case of Gani Berisha, a citizen who was beaten up in the Police Station in Prizren against all the rules of how to treat an arrested man.
- On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Justice in Kosovo revealed a scheme of vehicles with forged documents that were operating within Kosovo without any problems.

**MARCH**

2014

- On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Justice in Kosovo reported the biased process in which lawyers on official duty were being assigned in court. The program revealed the pattern as to how some lawyers, who are friends with judges and prosecutors, are favored and paid more compared to other lawyers.
- On March 9<sup>th</sup>, Justice in Kosovo reported on the arrest of police officers who were accused of spying, i.e. leaking Kosovo Police files to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Serbia.
- On March 16<sup>th</sup>, Justice in Kosovo discussed the hugely controversial trial of Ramadan Muja, the Prizren mayor who gave out public land illegally to a private company.
- On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, Justice in Kosovo followed up on the 9th of February program which started up the investigation against the surveyor Skender Sina for corruption, and how this case of corruption was nearly dismissed because of statute of limitations clause which makes cases too old to be dealt with if certain amount of time has passed.



## ARIL

2014

- On March 30 and April 6, 2014, Justice in Kosovo broadcasted a two-part investigative report on the kidnapping of Vonesa, a woman who was kidnapped by her husband whom she was trying to divorce because of domestic violence. He kidnapped her while she was staying in her parents' house, and shot at her family. Vonesa had previously warned the police that he threatened her, but the police did not treat her seriously. After Justice in Kosovo broadcast the report, the prosecution officials in Ferizaj said that they will expand investigations.
- On April 13, 2014, Justice in Kosovo broadcasted an investigative report about how a court failed to issue an arrest warrant for the suspect that shot Hakif Baraliu in the center of Prishtina in 2012. The suspected perpetrator was still free because the court never issued an arrest warrant. The prosecutor asked the court to approve the arrest warrant, but even in 2014 the arrest warrant was not approved. After the investigative report of Justice in Kosovo broadcast, the court issued an international arrest warrant for the suspected perpetrator.
- On April 20, 2014, Justice in Kosovo revealed how Besim Rexhepi, who is the head of the PDK branch in Remnik, Municipality of Viti, never served his jail sentence although he was sentenced to six months in jail by the final court decision/verdict. The Kosovo Police claimed that they could not find him, even though he was not hiding and he attended PDK local elections campaign events. The program revealed photos how Rexhepi was shaking hands with various ministers during the election campaign. After Justice in Kosovo broadcast the report, the ministers were subject to public pressure about why they were shaking hands with a fugitive.

## MAY

2014

- On May 18, 2014, Justice in Kosovo broadcast an investigative report on the conflict between a couple which resulted with the confiscation of the car that was owned by husband's father. The wife decided to sue her husband a day after they got married because he slandered her. His former wife won the case and he was sentenced with a 6,000 Euro fee. The court could not find her ex husband to take the money from him, so they decided to confiscate his father's vehicle, but this was illegal because his father had nothing to do with the case. After Justice in Kosovo broadcast the report, the vehicle was returned to its owner.



## JULY

2014

- On July 20<sup>th</sup>, Justice in Kosovo reported on a cocaine case in Peja, recording the police action. In this location, the police found the biggest manufacturing laboratory for drugs in Kosovo. They confiscated 25 kilograms of cocaine and arrested 6 people, among them the expert of manufacturing drugs who was a chemistry teacher nickname "Aunt" (Teze).
- On July 27<sup>th</sup>, Justice in Kosovo interviewed head prosecutor on Special Prosecution, Sevdije Morina. She spoke about war crime trials, ISIS terrorists from Kosovo and corrupt government officials. She also spoke about the new role the prosecution would have as EULEX transitions from an executive mandate to strictly mentoring, monitoring and advising.

## SEPTEMBER

2014

- On September 14<sup>th</sup>, Justice in Kosovo discussed the conviction of the judges involved in privatization crimes.
- On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, Justice in Kosovo reported that five police officers were promoted even though they didn't fulfill the requirements.





## OCTOBER

2014

- On October 5, 2014, Justice in Kosovo broadcasted an investigation into leaks from Gjakova prosecution. A man was able to find the messages that his wife sent to their neighbor. He showed all the messages to the recording team of “Justice in Kosovo”. These messages were released by a person working in the prosecution of Gjakova, thus breaching the code for penal procedures and the law on data protection. After the TV report the Basic Prosecution in Gjakova initiated an investigation on this case to find out who released the messages.
- On October 31, 2014, Justice in Kosovo broadcasted a TV report on the shooting in Prizren’s Police Station. A drunken person entered the police station in Prizren and started shooting. No one was able to stop him. The person was later arrested. After the report was broadcast, the Kosovo Police Inspectorate decided to analyze the situation and investigate Kosovo Police safety defects.



## NOVEMBER

2014

- On November 14<sup>th</sup>, after Justice in Kosovo published information about how the Ministry of Environment failed to collect the water tax, BIRN wrote to the State Prosecution twice. Prishtina’s Prosecution said the case is in the Serious Crimes department.
- On November 21<sup>st</sup>, Justice in Kosovo revealed problems with some tenders in the municipality of Peja. The mayor of Peja had named the vice-mayor, Shkumbin Gashi, as member of the Commission for Evaluating tenders. Officials from the Independent Commission for Public Procurement say that this is a violation of the law, however the mayor doesn’t see it this way. BIRN informed the State Prosecution, which responded that the case is in the Basic Prosecution in Peja.





## DECEMBER

2014

- During December, Justice in Kosovo reported on forged documents in the tender-winning dossier "F", from the company Friends Medical.

## 2014

### FAST FACTS

Frequency: **Weekly: Sundays at 9pm until end of October, from November: Fridays at 10pm, from December: Fridays at 8pm.**

Investigative Reports / Analysis: **43**

Exclusive Police Reports: **50**

Number of official investigations that have been started as a result of this program: **6**





## MEDIA PRODUCTION

# Web Production

### **Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë** (FROM 2011 TO DATE)

During 2014, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë continued to be the leading investigative journalism portal, which has published investigations and detailed analyses on a weekly basis since its launch in September 2011.

The paper has continued to specialize in “follow-the-money” techniques of investigative journalism and published several groundbreaking investigations that expose links between Kosovo institutions and businesses.



### **Imer Mushkolaj**

Head of Press Council

BIRN is the main investigative journalism media in Kosovo. Teaches you how to do professional and factual journalism. It's a model that should be followed by all journalists.



### **Zef Prendrecaj**

ZPD

I've had the honor of cooperating with BIRN for years. The professional and correct reporting in the field of rule of law has helped ZPD during the disciplinary investigations in many occasions.



### January 2014

In 2011, Gazeta JnK broke the story of irregularities in the privatization of Amortizations Factory by the Devolli Group, the socially owned enterprise (SOE) which was sold cheaply in a process which broke the procedures of the SOE sales. In January 2014, the Assembly approved creating an investigative commission for investigating this affair.

### February 2014

On February 18<sup>th</sup> 2014, the Advocates Chamber removed Korab Sejdiu from its list of lawyers. This came after the report from Gazeta JnK that Sejdiu doesn't fulfill the requirements to be a lawyer.

On February 24<sup>th</sup> Gazeta JnK published an investigation that reveals that KEDS is planning to sign a contract worth 5 million Euros to repair generators and tubes of the Kosova A plant. This deal was made by a consortium, part of which is Power Machine, a company of a famous Russian billionaire Alexey Mordashov, a well-known friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

### March 2014

On March 24<sup>th</sup> 2014, two indictments were proposed for tax derivation and forged documents, for Xhemajl Duraku, owner of the company "Dolphin." This decision was made after Gazeta JnK reported it in August 2013.

### April 2014

A public relations campaign of "Schweppes" was promoted in Kosovo, which was criticized internationally for its sexist language. Its translation into Albanian angered feminist activists in the country. Hellenic Kosovo Company that distributes this drink in Kosovo's market has changed the ads after GazetaJnK reported about it.

### May 2014

Gazeta JnK reported on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2014 that owners of a property in Mitrovica, Bekim Shyti and Kasim Beqiri, are being accused by the Prosecution in Mitrovica for usurpation and threatening. Gazeta JnK reported in 2012 that these two businessmen usurped the property of a businessman from Finland who bought it from the Privatization Agency.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014, a part of a usurped property that Lavdim Mehmeti bought in 2011 from Privatization Agency was freed from the people who were using it. This came a few days after Gazeta JnK reported the case.

### June 2014

On June 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 after two decisions from Ministry of Local Government Administration and Agency Against Corruption, Feim Salihu resigned from his position as a municipality counselor, keep-

ing his position as Chief of "Pastrimi" company. This decision was made after Gazeta JnK reported it.

On June 30<sup>th</sup> 2014, Gazeta JnK reported that Naser Bajraktari didn't declare to the Agency against Corruption two payments worth over 10 thousand Euros received for his work as an expert in a project done by German organization "GIZ".

### July 2014

On July 7<sup>th</sup>, Gazeta JnK published an investigation titled "Negotiated Million" which discussed the awarding of two big tenders from PTK. The second one was negotiated and was given to "Altima" company which is led by the son of a business partner of Ejupi Qerimi, chief of PTK.

### August 2014

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, Gazeta JnK published an investigation about the obstacles of flights in Kosovo as a result of limitations from Serbia. Flights from and to Prishtina last longer and cost more because of Serbia's limitations. Currently you can enter Kosovo through air only through Macedonia.

### September 2014

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, Gazeta JnK reported on a few NGOs which benefited from the Prime Minister's Office and don't report on their benefits. Some



of the NGOs who were given money, never showed how they spend their donations, by delaying their financial reports. During 2013, the Prime Minister's Office gave a few donations in the amount of 1 million 300 thousand euros, while a million of those were given by the Office for Communities.

On September 29<sup>th</sup>, Gazeta JnK published a report about Nuhi Uka and his coworkers in the basic court of Prishtina who have caused millions of Euros worth of damage to the budget of Kosovo through privatization of property in the most important business area in the country. But Uka won't be serving jail time for that, because he was given probation.

### October 2014

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, Gazeta JnK published an investigation about Uliks Emra, a former soccer player who had entered politics in 2010, and was named on July 31st 2014 deputy-chief of mission in the Kosovo Embassy in Croatia by Enver Hoxhaj, now-former minister of Foreign Affairs. This position isn't envisaged in the Law for Foreign Service of the Republic of Kosovo. Emra also accompanied Hoxhaj during his elections campaign.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, Gazeta JnK reported on the request of 11

NGOs for the removal of the book "Criminalistics" by Vesel Latifi from the official curricula of University of Prishtina. In this book it says that a victim of rape is usually "a woman that is easily lied to, reckless, and sluts". As a result of public pressure, this book has been temporarily removed from the curricula.

### November 2014

Gazeta JnK reported on November 24<sup>th</sup> about a public parking lot that was being exploited by a person. In Carshia e Vogel in Gjakove, the previous governance of Pal Lekaj had started fixing a parking lot in an apartment complex that is a municipal property, but they never finished it. Since then, this area serves as parking lot for cars of this complex but also as a private parking lot of Nijazi Kusari, a resident of this building, who takes 1 euro from each parked car, and doesn't give explanations

about the destination of this money.

### December 2014

Gazeta JnK reported on December 4<sup>th</sup> about the awful conditions of a dog shelter in Peja. In August, the Peja Municipality had gathered all the stray dogs and had sent them to this shelter. Their condition within the iron bars and under open sky is horrible, but what make it even more horrible is the dead dogs outside the iron bars. Animal rights activists suspect that the dogs were killed with guns or with lethal injections.

# 2014

## FAST FACTS

Articles published:  
**251**

Editions:  
**52**

Visitors :  
**1,415,474**

Unique Visitors:  
**705,998**

Page views:  
**2,365,371**

Daily Visits:  
**3,878**

Daily Unique Visitors:  
**1934**

Daily Page views:  
**6480**

Facebook fan page:  
**200,233 fansa**

Twitter:  
**7000 "ndjekës"**

Awards:  
**3**





## Balkan Insight and Balkan Transitional Justice

(BI from 2006 to date and BTJ from 2011 to date)

BIRN Kosovo is part of the regional team that produces Balkan Insight and Balkan Transitional Justice, the region's leading online source of news and in-depth analysis with a regional and local context, the latter with a focus on war crimes trials.

In 2014, BIRN's journalists produced 4315 news pieces (an average of 16 news daily), and over 430 premium articles (169 analysis, 59 comments, 121 features, 28 interviews, 37 investigations, 30 profiles).

Balkan Insight's Google Analytics records show that domestic and international readers had even greater interest in published articles than in the previous year. In the stated period Balkan Insight had 5,032,068 page views, out of which 1,266,909 unique visitors. 51.2% per cent of visitors return (1,258,189), while 48.8% are new visitors (1,199,596).

The countries from which Balkan Insight had the most visits are: United States, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Serbia, Germany, United Kingdom, Macedonia, Canada, Kosovo, Australia, and Sweden.

In the past year BIRN's web team was dedicated to content promotion on various social networks which significantly increased the number of Facebook "likes" on Balkan Insight page from past year's 14,069 to 26,505, while Balkan Insight's Twitter profile went from 9,545 to 13,495 followers.

In 2014 Balkan Transitional Justice programme published 1,019 articles, out of which 62 analyses and 957 news pieces.

In this reporting period BTJ team has released 12 radio episodes. 110 radio stations in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro broadcast the Radio programme "Roads to Justice" on a monthly basis. Also, in 2014, two regional investigations have been published "World War I History Divides Balkan Schoolchildren" and "Arkan's Paramilitaries: Tigers Who Escaped Justice".





PRINT

# PRISHTINA INSIGHT

*(from 2008 to date)*

2014 was an ambitious and challenging year for Prishtina Insight (PI). With the new format and design adopted in previous August, PI increased its focus on unforgettable long-form journalism, building each edition around a cover story. These stories spanned from human interest – such as the experience of Ukraine’s Albanian minority – to investigations such as the allegations of corruption at the EU’s rule of law mission, EULEX, and were paired with eye-catching graphic design and stunning photography.

## **Accountability of international officials**

Prishtina Insight published three long-form investigations that raised troubling questions about the activities of international officials in Kosovo. One of the most memorable editions of the year, “Highway from Dell” looked at the role of the former US ambassador Christopher Dell in pushing Kosovo to sign a problematic highway contract with the US-Turkish consortium Bechtel-Enka, and his later hiring by Bechtel. In October, PI broke a story showing how officials from the EU pressured the office of the Kosovo President to bypass the Constitution to allow three international justices to continue serving on the country’s highest court. In November, PI investigated allegations of corruption made by a former prosecutor within EULEX. The investigation revealed that EULEX officials had initially ignored the prosecutor’s allegations.

## **Kosovo-Serbia relations**

The ongoing normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia continues to be one of the most important, and emotional issues, in the country. Through investigations, human-interest features and analyses, PI shed light on and humanized this important issue. In March, a PI cover story “Serbia’s rogue rail” explored how Serbia continues to illegally operate its nation railway in Kosovo’s borders. A July cover story, “Alone in the North,” explored how the small Albanian population struggled to continue living in largely Serb northern Kosovo. Meanwhile, PI also took part in the BIG DEAL, a project monitoring the implementation of the Kosovo-Serbia agreements, with stories looking at how these policy development were being felt on the ground.

## **Breaking down the national elections and their aftermath**

The early national elections held in June and their protracted aftermath was a challenging and exciting period for PI. The paper took the unconventional step by running a piece of fiction as its cover story head of the elections. “Drita 2050” told a story of Kosovo’s future prime minister as a way to ask critical, provocative questions about where the country is headed. It was paired by thoughtful analyses, informative graphics and stories, breaking down the national elections in depth. In the aftermath, which saw six months of political deadlock, PI broke down the confusing legal battles



in the Constitutional Court, and exposed how the court, through questionable rulings was ensuring political paralysis.

### **BIG DEAL: Monitoring the implementation of the Kosovo-Serbia Agreements**

BIRN Kosovo and Internews Kosova teamed up with the Belgrade-based Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) to monitor every agreement made between Kosovo and Serbia since 2011: 16 topics in total.

Since 2011, Kosovo and Serbia have held negotiations on freedom of movement, mutual recognition of diplomas, telecommunications and energy, and more. A high-level agreement between the two prime ministers, signed 19 April 2013, provides for the effective inclusion of Serbian-majority northern Kosovo under Prishtina's control. BIRN Kosovo partnered with an organization in Serbia to monitor the level of implementation of each of the agreements to see how it affected ordinary citizens. The results were published in stories throughout the year and collected in a comprehensive report, published in November, one and a half years after the so-called historic high-level agreement. The report is the result of more than 70 interviews with key stakeholders including negotiators, politicians, municipal officials, professors, as well as ordinary citizens and presents a complete state of play regarding the implementation of each agreement. Analysis found that in November 2014, only four of the 16 agreements had been implemented. One of these was the agreement to create an implementation committee.

Negotiators from both Kosovo and Serbia were present for the launch in Prishtina, as well as 120 stakeholders: government officials, members of civil society, citizens from across Kosovo, including the north, and ambassadors.

The project has also hosted debates with interlocutors sitting in Kosovo and in Serbia, as well as produced stories for all of BIRN's Kosovo and regional media products.



**Hajrulla Ceku**

EC ma ndryshe

Even though Kino Lumbardhi is located in Prizren, the battle for it was developed mainly in Prishtina. The initiative for Lumbardhi needed the support of media, and BIRN offered that in the most effective way. TV debates, stories and articles about Lumbardhi gave the right power to an initiative, which could have been left in the margins of the debates and the public and institutional interest.

### **PI facts:**

*Prishtina Insight at a glance*

*Frequency: Every 2 weeks*

*Editions: 23*

*Pages: 16-24*

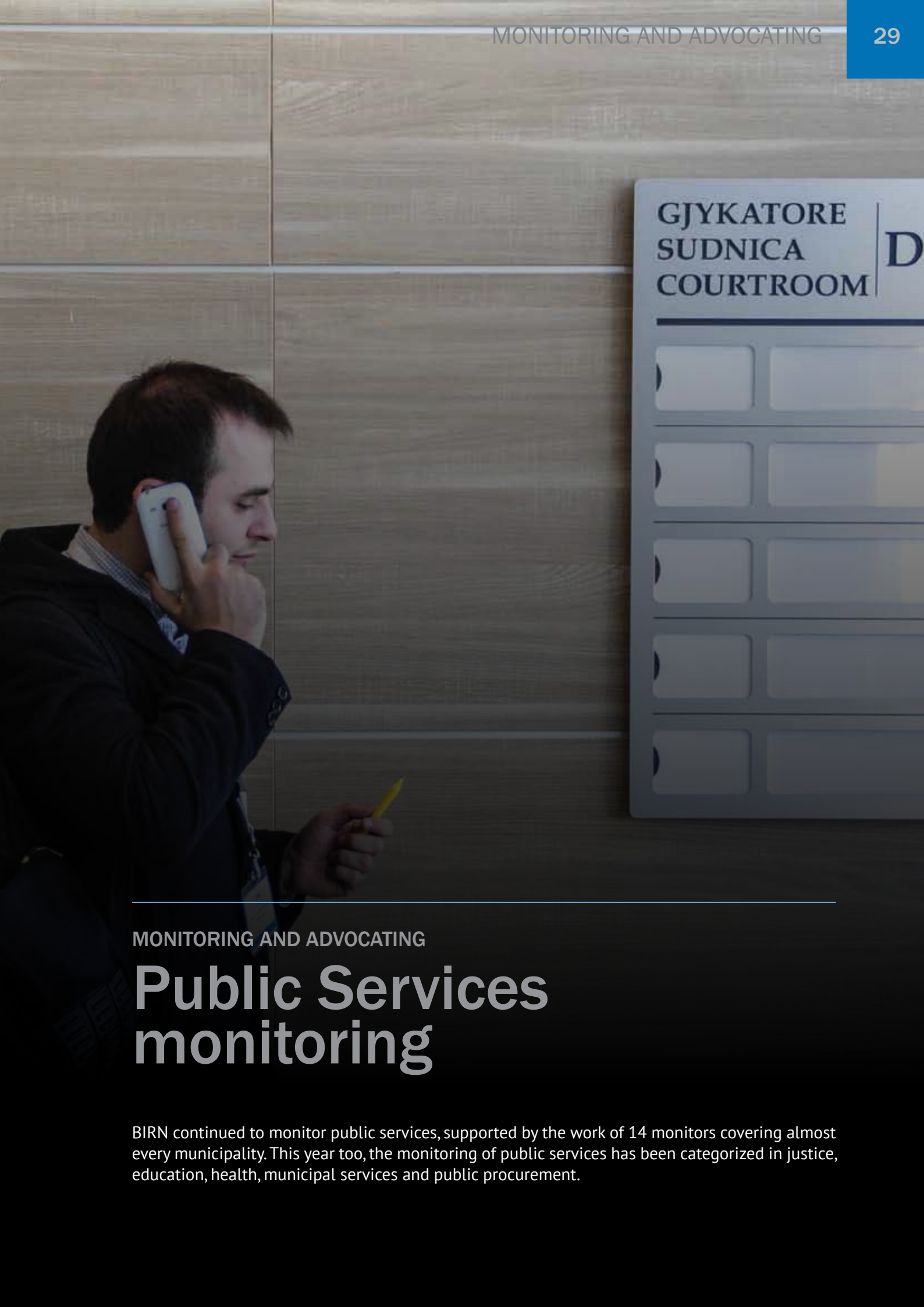
*Stories: 301*

*Longform Stories: 23*

*Graphics: 65*

*Circulation: 2,000 copies in print*





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MONITORING AND ADVOCATING

# Public Services monitoring

BIRN continued to monitor public services, supported by the work of 14 monitors covering almost every municipality. This year too, the monitoring of public services has been categorized in justice, education, health, municipal services and public procurement.





### **Judiciary:**

For the eighth year in a row, BIRN continued monitoring trial proceedings in Basic Courts, the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. This year, for the first time ever, the Constitutional Court has also been included in the Report. 2014 was the second year in which courts and prosecutions have applied new organizational structure and new criminal provisions and criminal procedures.

The monitoring covered regular courts in 26 Kosovo municipalities (Basic, Appeals and Supreme Court.) This report is based on 501 questionnaires completed during 2014, out of which 426 hearings were held, while 75 monitored court hearings were not held.

Among the irregularities is the problem that the Palace of Justice, whose construction started on 3 June 2011, was planned to be finished within a 24-month period, meaning in 2012, became functional only in 2015. The project was planned based on the old law on judiciary. Back then, the internal arrangement of courts was different from the current one, which entered into force in 2013.

Among numerous procedural violations during this year, BIRN has identified violations such as:

- Problems with adequate translation
- Non-reading of the rights of the witness and incorrect management of cases
- Disrespect of legal deadlines stipulated with the Criminal Procedure Code
- Non-inclusion of statements in the minutes
- Disrespect of legal deadlines for announcement of judgments

- Non-reading of the indictment in the initial hearing.

Bench Bars, otherwise known as Roundtables, organized by the Kosovo Bar Association, have been organized for two years now, but this year for the first time BIRN reached an agreement with the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA) to monitor them.

These roundtables gather lawyers, judges, prosecutors and police officers who discuss the problems faced during the course of their work. These roundtables provide a good example of the realization of that goal, since many of the problems discussed during them are problems that are observed during monitoring of court hearings, ranging from ex officio representation by lawyers, cases pending in north Mitrovica, the relationship of the court with the media, equality of the parties, and others.

### **Public Procurement:**

Under the auspices of the project for monitoring public services and public expenditures, BIRN has monitored the announcements of public contracts in all public institutions of Kosovo. Monitoring was followed by further research and reporting of the key findings immediately after the cases were disclosed to media.

Monitoring of public money spending through public procurement is of crucial importance. Such a process can identify irregularities in the content as well as technical, procedural and administrative aspects so that improvements can be made. BIRN's report contains the most significant cases of suspected misuse of public funds through public procurement. The report

addresses these cases, offering conclusions and recommendations for the improvement of the issues it identifies.

During 2014 procurement was characterized by the awarding of public contracts to people close to mayors and procurement officials. The report also discloses the negotiated tenders that are of large value, which avoid open procedures and harm free competition, such as in the case of iPad procurement by the Assembly of Kosovo. Furthermore, fuel supply tenders, as a very complicated and problematic field, have been analyzed, with the conclusion that supply companies set ridiculous and unreasonable premium pricing.

BIRN's report contains findings from monitoring 168 contracting authorities, which have been grouped into these main categories: municipalities, independent institutions, public enterprises, government of Kosovo with all of the individual ministries, office of the Prime Minister, Assembly of Kosovo and office of the President.

Public procurement in Kosovo faces various challenges, ranging from the technical, inadequate budget planning to political interference and corruption charges. Thus, according to this report, there is a lack of adequate planning of costs, preparation of tender dossiers and finalization of contract award.

The report on Public Procurement monitoring called "Hidden Tender" which summarised all cases monitored in 2014 was published in January 2015.





## Training and Media Development

Internews Kosova, assisted by BIRN Kosovo, organized seven sensitization and information sharing workshops in the target municipalities to introduce and promote social media as a tool to fight corruption. KALLXO.com social media editor Valon Canhasi was engaged in conducting the workshops with the targeted municipalities.





The workshops were intended for heads of the Administration and Personnel Units, Offices of Information/Spokespersons and IT Managers. The workshops put a particular emphasis on developing different tools for increasing interaction between local governments and citizens. According to planned activities, during this year BIRN and its partner Internews Kosova had individual meetings with the Mayors of the following municipalities: Prishtina, Decan, Peja, Ferizaj, Shtime, Gjakove, Mitrovice, Malisheve, and Gjilan. Also, the monitors which are located in the field have frequent meetings with the mayors of the municipality that they monitor. The discussions lead to the incorporation of the [www.kallxo.com](http://www.kallxo.com)'s widget 'Frame' in municipalities' websites. As an outcome of the meetings, 29 municipalities incorporated the frame in their websites.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, Kallxo project provided the opportunity for municipal officials to participate in the largest Regional Conference on Information and Communications Technology ICT, KosICT, which was held on October 30 and 1st of November in Prishtina.

On September 19, 2014, there was a conference held on the topic "Public Services of XXI century." The purpose of the conference was to present the

insights of the current situation of public services delivered by municipalities of Kosova. Present at this conference were Directors of Public Services from Gjilan, Kacanik, Podujeve, Vushtrri, Malisheva, Drenas, Kamenica, Klina, Lipjan and Dragash. Panelists of this conference were Mr. Faik Ispahiu, executive director of I/KS and Mr. Agron Demi from GAP Institute.

On September 30, I/KS organized a workshop with youngsters from 16 to 25 years of age on the topic "Active citizenship through the usage of Social Media". A call for participants was issued through an open call on social media. The best applicants were selected to be part of this activity. 22 youngsters from across Kosovo took part in the workshop.

The purpose of the workshop was to teach members of a younger generation how to use the social media in order to be integrated as socially active citizens. Youngsters from different ethnic backgrounds, including four young activists coming from the RAE community participated in this workshop. The training was held at Innovation Center Kosova (ICK).

During the fourth quarter of 2014, the project team organized interactive presentations in two high schools in Serbian-majority municipalities. Municipalities with the majority of Serbs because they were identified as the most marginalized communities in relation to interaction with social media.



**Donika Kadaj Bujupi**

AAK MP

You are unique, independent professionals and the only ones who apply investigative journalism. Proud of you. Example of courage and fighting the evil. In public's service.



**Lutfi Haziri**

BIRN has done an amazing work in rightful, objective and not biased reporting to the citizens of Kosovo. BIRN has influenced in creating public opinion in many important issues.

<sup>1</sup> Municipalities: Podujevë, Vushtrri, Obiliq, Drenas, Suharekë, Malishevë, Rahovec, Mamushë, Dragash, Gjilan, Viti, Novobërd, Ferizaj, Hani i Elezit, Partesh, Gracanica, Klllokot, Decan, Klina, Fushë Kosovë, Istog, Junik, Prishtinë, Ranillug, Gjakova, Shtërpçë, Skenderaj, North Mitroica, and Lipjan,





## ROUNDTABLES:

BIRN held a roundtable discussion on April 1, 2014, to launch the draft of the 2013 Annual Court Monitoring Report. Monitors presented a comparative analysis with the previous reports, and provided both technical and substantial findings observed during the year-long process. The discussion was attended by many high profile figures such as: officials from Kosovo Judicial Council, Supreme Court of Kosovo, from the State Prosecutions office, officials from the Basic Courts of the municipal courts, and lawyers from the Kosovo Chamber of Advocate. The officials that attended the roundtable gave feedback on the report and pledged to work on reducing the irregularities spotted during 2013. Also, their feedback was later included in the final draft of the report.

BIRN held a roundtable to promote its newest report on the monitoring of the Kosovo – Serbia agreement, called “Civilized Monotony?” which was launched on November 13, just a week before the 19 April 2013 agreement would be exactly one and a half years old. The report launch event in Prishtina was well attended by dignitaries and civil society stakeholders. Kosovo DPM Edita Tahiri and Serbian Liaison officer Dejan Pavicevic spoke about the successes and challenges of implementing the agreements, as did members of the diplomatic community including H.E. Ian Cliff. The report was well-received and media in both Kosovo and Serbia reported

on Big Deal’s findings. The event gathered more than 120 stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in the process of agreements implementation and dealing with the past of two countries, and yielded more than 50 articles in Kosovo and Serbia.

## ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

In July 2014, BIRN organized on-the-job training with increasingly important topics such as legal aspect of journalism, tips on drafting requests for access to public documents, how to write a news, monitoring of public tenders, techniques of journalistic writing, online reporting as well as usage of social media.

BIRN also held ongoing on-the-job trainings with the purpose of enhancing the capacities of monitors to identify specific issues related to the delivery of public services and court monitoring. On-the-job training was also provided to the new monitors that joined BIRN through 2014. BIRN senior monitors have helped them to be involved in this project and be more familiar with it.

On April 10th, Faik Ispahiu from Internews Kosovo held a training for Dealing with confidential information and reports received on kallxo.com, and Gresa Musliu spoke about access to public documents and document-based reporting. 15 investigators from 3 organizations: Kosovar Center for Security Studies, Belgrade Center for Security Policy and



**Agron Demi**

GAP Institute

GAP’s cooperation with BIRN has been a huge help for us to make decision-makers react. From 2007 until now GAP and BIRN have collaborated in monitoring local governance, holding them accountable to mayors’ promises. While GAP has gained more attention through cooperating with BIRN, BIRN has benefited from the analyses and investigative reports that GAP has published.





Institute for Democracy and Mediation, took part in this training.

On May 2nd, Valon Canhasi trained BIRN's staff on the importance and the methods of using social networks for investigation and publishing BIRN's work.

On May 23rd, BIRN's staff attended a training by Arian Hyseni, the IT manager, and producer Gazmend Avdiu on how to use GoPro cameras.

In June, Florina Ujupi and Rahman Ramaj from BIRN worked with Agron Demi and Berat Thaqi from GAP Institute, where they learned from GAP about monitoring public expenses.

On June 7th, BIRN organized a mandatory training for staff on monitoring elections.

On July 11th, BIRN organized a one-day training for all staff where Flutura Kusari, legal advisor, spoke about legal issues, Gresa Musliu spoke about accessing public documents, Muhamet Hajrullahu spoke about creating a story, and Parim Olluri spoke about public procurement. Jeta Xharra spoke about investigative journalism and court reporting, Valon Canhasi spoke about using social networks, and Faik Ispahiu spoke about kallxo.live.

**Improving justice reporting:** BIRN provided continuous on-the-job training for its staff to professionally conduct research and investigative reports about the performance of judicial institutions. The

training equipped our staff with the necessary skills to conduct better – and more ethical – reporting and research, as well as improved writing and production of TV reports.

## SUMMER SCHOOL FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM:

From August 24 to 30, Lorik Bajrami, Vigan Jedrashi and Perparim Isufi from BIRN attended Summer School of Investigative Reporting in Becici, Montenegro, which was organized by BIRN. They were trained by Paul Lewis, Washington correspondent for the Guardian; Christian Spahr, director for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Media Program South East Europe; and Gordana Igric, BIRN Regional Director

TEDxPrishtina – the producer of Life in Kosovo and Justice in Kosovo, Faik Ispahiu has given his support to organizing the third edition of TEDxPrishtina – the local conference that aims to promote ideas worth spreading in Kosovo and abroad. Faik Ispahiu engaged his expertise in organizing and managing such an event which involved well-known names from different disciplines and which gather a large audience. Apart the technical support, which includes covering the whole event with video recording, Mr. Ispahiu shared his knowledge about public speaking to the 15 speakers.



**Andrew Russell**  
UNDP Coordinator

“Again and again, the team from BIRN has proven itself to be bold and tenacious in its pursuit of integrity, human rights, justice for all. I’m honoured to consider BIRN as one of UNDP’s most highly valued partners in Kosovo.”



**Naim Ismajli**

Professional and daring investigative journalism, unique and innovative in the way of reporting, transparent to the public and very necessary these times.





## MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

**Access to public documents:** during 2014 BIRN Kosovo continued to work on monitoring and testing the implementation of the law on access to public documents. Most of the official requests that have been sent to almost all public institutions were related to public expenditures, CVs of senior officials prior to or after their appointments, minutes of board meetings, lists of beneficiaries of privatization tenders and public contracts.

During 2014 around 200 official requests to the public institutions were submitted. All data collected were translated into a report, which was

published on June 2014. The report shows slight improvements in implementing the freedom of information law. However, public institutions should be more open especially when public spending is in question.

## UNIVERSITY LECTURE

On May 23rd, 2014, Jeta Xharra from BIRN and David Leigh, editor in The Guardian, held a lecture in AUK. David Leigh talked about how he worked with Julian Assange on publishing Wikileaks. Leigh explained that he wouldn't have worked with Julian if he had known him better. He also talked about the biggest investigations he conducted for The Guardian.



## LEGAL AND ADVOCACY DEPARTMENT

Since its launch, Kallxo.com platform has received 4007 reports. The reports are divided into five main categories which consist of: corruption, conflict of interest, elections, fraud, municipal services and other. Internews Kosova constantly reviews the cases reported on [KALLXO.com](http://KALLXO.com) and verifies them on daily basis.

The reports that are sent to [www.kallxo.com](http://www.kallxo.com) are undertaken by the Research Unit consisting of monitors who are located in the field, journalists, and by the legal office.

When the reports are verified by court monitors and journalists, the legal office drafts an official legal complaint that refers to the laws that were broken in that reported case, and provides this complaint with necessary documentation and proof.

As such this complaint goes directly and officially to the institution that needs to take measures for this breach to be addressed. BIRN has found that this methodology is causing many institutions to take measures because an official complaint, protocolled and backed by proof is more difficult to ignore than a media report.

## OVERALL, DURING 2014, BIRN IN COOPERATION WITH ITS PARTNER INTERNEWS KOSOVA SENT 63 FOLLOW UP COMPLAINTS BACKED BY EVIDENCE:

TEN COMPLAINTS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA, THEY ANSWERED NONE;

SEVEN COMPLAINTS TO THE BASIC PROSECUTION AROUND KOSOVO;

TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE KOSOVO POLICE INSPECTORATE, AND THEY ANSWERED ONLY ONE;

TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE KOSOVO CHAMBER OF ADVOCATES;

TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE ELECTION PANEL FOR APPEAL AND COMPLAINTS;

SIX COMPLAINTS TO THE ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCY, THEY ANSWERED THREE TIMES;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE KOSOVO PROSECUTION COUNCIL AND THEY ANSWERED;

TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE BASIC COURT;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND THEY ANSWERED;

THREE COMPLAINTS TO THE KOSOVO POLICE AND THEY ANSWERED ALL THREE TIMES;

ONE COMPLAINT TO EULEX;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT AND THEY ANSWERED;

TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND THEY ANSWERED ONCE;

THREE COMPLAINTS TO THE KOSOVO JURIDICAL COUNCIL AND THEY ANSWERED ONLY TWICE;

TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND THEY ANSWERED;



TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT REVIEWING BODY AND THEY ANSWERED ONCE;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE PRISHTINA BASIC COURT;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF MITROVICA- DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE SPECIAL PROSECUTION AND THEY ANSWERED;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCES-DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE EMERGENCY DIRECTORIES;

SEVEN COMPLAINTS TO THE STATE PROSECUTION AND THEY ANSWERED FIVE TIMES;

ONE COMPLAINT TO THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AND THEY ANSWERED;

TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE DISCIPLINARY PROSECUTION OFFICE AND THEY ANSWERED BOTH TIMES;

Out of 63 complaints sent to the relevant institutions, 25 of them replied. The following are the answers with the most impact:

Anti Corruption Agency – 10 thousand Euros of Naser Bajraktari – Anti Corruption Agency sued in June 2015, and Naser Bajraktari was sentenced.

Anti Corruption Agency – Case of Nazmi Iballi, a PDK political adviser who was named Dean of a Faculty without fulfilling the criteria and while holding both positions. The Anti Corruption Agency decided that this was a conflict of interest, after we notified them, and as a result Nazmi Iballi resigned from his position as political adviser.

The Prosecutorial Council gave us access to documents of Florent Mucaj, the representative of the civil society in this institution.

After BIRN reported on two police officers sleeping during their working hours, the Kosovo Police has taken suspending measures and took the case to the Inspectorate.

After Justice in Kosovo reported about the information leak from the Prosecution of Gjakova, the Kosovo Police and the Directory for Investigating Economical Crimes said that they had started investigating the case.





BIRN KOSOVO

# Awards:

On October 2014, **Merita Krasniqi** and Njomza Salihi won an award from GIZ and the Kosovo Association of Professional Journalists (AGPK) for the third best article on Education for the article “People with power win state’s scholarships” published in Gazetajnk.

On October 23rd 2014, **Nektar Zogiani** and Tinka Kurti from Gazeta JnK were awarded first place in the category of online media in the competition for investigative journalist in the poverty field, organized by UNKT, and monitored by Kosovo Journalists Association.

On December 2014, **Petrit Collaku** and Parim Olluri won Best Online Story for the article “Negotiated Million.” The award was sponsored by UNDP and AGPK.

On December 2014, **Kreshnik Gashi** won the award from UNDP and AGPK for the

category best investigative report for the article “Besim doesn’t go to jail.”

**Kaltrina Rexhepi** was awarded by Kosovo Journalists Association for the article “Irregular business burden to inheritance” published on June 24th 2014.

**Life in Kosovo** won an award from NGO Coalition for Protecting Children in the category “Best TV program for reporting children’s rights” for the coverage on children with disabilities.

Also in 2014, Princeton University (a top Ivy League university in The United States) published a study on BIRN’s impact in the judiciary system through the monitoring BIRN does each year.





BIRN KOSOVO

# Partners and donors

**BIRN Kosovo works with a large network of local civil society organizations in Kosovo, as well as regionally and internationally**

1. Radio Television of Kosovo
2. Radio Television 21
3. KOSMA network of Serbian local TV stations
4. Internews Kosova
5. Institute for Development Policy, INDEP
6. Group for Legal and Political Studies, GLPS
7. Press Council
8. Crossing Bridges Productions
9. Institute for Advanced Studies, GAP
10. Advocacy Training and Recourse Centre
11. Initiative for Progress, NGO in Ferizaj
12. Syri i Vizionit, Peja
13. Community Building Mitrovica, CBM
14. Forum for Civic Initiative
15. NGO Change, Gjilan
16. Mreza TV
17. Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture – ACDC
18. NGO AKTIV

## Regional partnerships

19. BIRN Serbia
20. BIRN Macedonia
21. BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina
22. TV Aldi, Presheve
23. Al Jazeera
24. OCCRP

## International cooperation and partnerships

25. Thomson Reuters Foundation
26. Saferworld
27. Sierra Club
28. European Climate Foundation
29. Frontline Club
30. SCOOP



# Diary of impact from BIRN stories

In January 26, 2014, Justice in Kosovo broadcasted a landmark investigation that looked at the challenges faced by investors in Kosovo. Xhevat Sadrijaj, an Albanian who lives in Switzerland, together with his partners, wanted to invest in Kosovo and he bought a property near Grand Hotel Prishtina. He claimed to have been blackmailed by Rustem Rukolli, the person that usurped the property. After JnK broadcast the analysis, Kosovo Police started an investigation against the persons that hampered the owner's access to his property.

Life in Kosovo, starting in January 2014, investigated the management of University of Prishtina. As a result of the problems, there were protests and discontents in University of Prishtina. Rector Ibrahim Gashi resigned from his position on February 8th.

**JAN**  
2014

**FEB**  
2014

On February 9th, Hasan Berisha, a businessman from Gjakova confessed in front of DnK cameras that he had paid 50 thousand euros of ransome money to Skender Sina, a court property surveyor expert, to issue a favorable property decisions for him. Berisha had testified about this to the local prosecution 10 years ago and the prosecution made sure this case sits in their lockers long enough for it to become too old to prosecute. The programme caused alarm amongst the legal institutions and measures were taken after the show was aired. The program was used as testimony in court.

In February, Justice in Kosovo reported another scandal. Around a thousand imported vehicles didn't pay customs. This tax avoidance was made possible by exploiting the governmental decision that says that vehicles registered with parallel Serbian plates don't have to pay for customs when they register with Kosovar plates. Our investigation revealed that criminal gangs were importing Kosovo vehicles with forged documents by registering the cars with parallel structures in Kosovo. This act is said to have cost Kosovo hundreds of thousands of Euros. The Prosecution and the Kosovo Police said following the program that they are investigating the case.



## MAR 2014

On March 17, 2014, Gazeta JnK wrote an article about the illegal canteen in the Faculty of Education which was being managed by the driver of Et'hemCeku, the dean of the Faculty of Education. Gazeta JnK's team visited the canteen and upon purchasing services there, they were not presented with a fiscal receipt. However, the canteen was closed one day after the article was published.

On March 26, 2014, Gazeta JnK wrote an article about a canteen in the primary school "Maihal Grameno", in Rahovec, which besides food/muffins also sold notebooks, pens and pencils, and food high on calories. This canteen was opened without regular procedures foreseen by the Law on Procurement. The contract was signed on January 2014, but the canteen started working two months earlier. After Gazeta JnK wrote the article, the canteen was closed.

On March 30 and April 6, 2014, Justice in Kosovo broadcasted a two-part investigative report on Vonesa, a woman who was kidnapped by her husband whom she was trying to divorce because of domestic violence. He kidnapped her while she was staying in her parents' house, and shot at her family. Vonesa had previously warned the police that he threatened her, but the police did not treat her seriously. After Justice in Kosovo broadcast the report, the prosecution officials in Ferizaj said that they will expand investigations.

On April, 02, 2014, Gazeta JnK wrote an article about a KEK tender that was awarded to a consortium, whose member is a Russian oligarch who has strong connections with the Russian President Putin. The Polish Company that was also a candidate for the tender complained to the Procurement Review Body because they claimed that there were breaches on the Procurement Law. After the article was published, the tender was cancelled.

On April 13, 2014, *Justice in Kosovo* broadcasted an investigative report about Hakif Baraliu who was shot in the center of Prishtina in 2012, but his shooter never got arrested. The suspected perpetrator was still free because the court did not issue an arrest warrant. The prosecutor asked the court to approve the arrest warrant, but until 2014 the arrest warrant was not approved. After the investigative report of Justice in Kosovo was broadcasted, the court issued an international arrest warrant for the suspected perpetrator.

On April 20, 2014, Justice in Kosovo revealed how Besim Rexhepi, who is the head of the PDK branch in Remnik, Municipality of Viti, never served his jail sentence although he was sentenced to six months in jail by the final court decision/verdict. The Kosovo Police claimed that they could not find him, even though he was not hiding and he attended PDK local elections campaign events. The program revealed photos how Rexhepi was shaking hands with various ministers during the election campaign. After Justice in Kosovo broadcast the report, the ministers were subject to public pressure about why they were shaking hands with a fugitive.

On April, 28, 2014, Gazeta JnK wrote an article about how Lavdim Mehmeti, who had come from abroad to invest in Kosova, was unable to access his property because it was usurped. Mehmeti thought that, once he bought the property, the state would deal with the usurpation of it, but that did not happen. On May 2nd 2014, a part of a usurped property that Lavdim Mehmeti bought in 2011 from Privatization Agency was freed from the people who were using it. This came a few days after Gazeta JnK reported the case.

## APR 2014



MAY

2014

On May 4, 2014, Justice in Kosovo broadcasted an investigative report on the illegal gravel exploitation in the region of Dukagjin. Citizens who witness illegal exploitation, are encouraged/expected to report the case to the Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals, but in the past few months the commission had not been responsive on the phone and no measures were taken against illegal exploiters. During the programme, inspectors admitted to fear of intervening in such cases. However, after the Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals found out that Justice in Kosovo had recorded the exploitation they started penal procedures against the illegally exploiting companies.

On May 18, 2014, *Justice in Kosovo* broadcasted an investigative report on the conflict between a couple which resulted with the confiscation of the car that was owned by the husband's father. The wife decided to sue her husband a day after they got married because he slandered her. His former wife won the case and he was sentenced with a 6,000 Euro fee. The court could not find her ex husband to take the money from him, so they decided to confiscate his father's vehicle, but this was illegal because his father had nothing to do with the case. After *Justice in Kosovo* broadcast the report, the vehicle was returned to its owner.

In June, "Life in Kosovo" discovered a huge scam with electric meters that were purchased to measure how much energy was spent in household and calculate payment. The public company KOSTT announced the winner of the bid for electricity meters to be the consortium Caraglio & Electra, which offered the price of 1.9 million. But ultimately another company, Monten & G3, was awarded the tender at a higher price, 2.3 million euro, on the grounds that it had a technically superior offer.

With the information revealed in Life in Kosovo, BIRN addressed the Special Prosecution, for the clash of bids between KOSTT, OSHP and ELECTRA, that had to do with the installment of energy meters and with the legal irregularities that followed this tender process. In the formal letter we asked the prosecution to take proper measurements in this case. On April 2015, the Special Prosecution started investigating this case.

On June 24, 2014, Gazeta JnK published an article on a business which was acting illegally, not pay taxes to the state and does not issue fiscal receipts to its customers. For four years the visitors of one of the oldest bridges in Kosovo needed to go through a restaurant to see the bridge. The owner of this restaurant is the brother of one of the officials in the municipality of Vushtrri; he ignored the rules of the state and did not pay taxes regularly. After Gazeta JnK wrote the article, the owner of the restaurant, Bedri Istrefi was punished by the Kosovo Tax Agency for not issuing fiscal receipts.

JUN

2014

SEP

2014

BIRN Kosovo this year monitored the Matura State Exam, scheduled during June and September. BIRN staff was located in schools across Kosovo. On September 4, 2014, Life in Kosovo held a debate on the process of Matura exam, discussing the findings of the monitors and problems/irregularities that happened during the process. The Ministry of Education thanked BIRN crew for the findings and recommendations that were issued with the release of the report of Matura Exam and promised that next year they will try to reduce irregularities.



KALLXO.com received information in September 2014, through photos showing two Kosovo Police officers sleeping on duty. We sent a formal complaint to the Police with the photos attached. The Office for Information of the Police informed us that the two police officers were suspended for 48 hours and the case was sent to the Police Inspectorate for further investigations.

On October 5, 2014, *Justice in Kosovo* broadcasted an investigation on message leaking from Gjakova prosecution. A man was able to find the messages that his wife sent to their neighbor, though he should not have been able to. He showed all the messages to the recording team of "*Justice in Kosovo*". These messages were released by a person working in the prosecution of Gjakova, thus breaching the code for penal procedures and the law on data protection. After *Justice in Kosovo* broadcast this TV report the Basic Prosecution in Gjakova started investigations on this case to find out who released the messages.

**OCT**  
2014

On October 10, 2014, *Life in Kosovo* held a debate about the process that led to the reappointment of the international judges in the Constitutional Court of Kosovo. After a thorough investigation, *Life in Kosovo* team found the correspondence of the EULEX judges with their colleagues in European Union headquarters in Brussels. The correspondence showed how the legal officers of EULEX managed to convince the close staff of the president Atifete Jahjaga to give them the mandate without taking the issue for voting in the parliament and without making the formal oath in front of the President.

On October 31, 2014, *Justice in Kosovo* broadcast a TV report on the shooting in Prizren's Police Station. A drunken person entered the police station in Prizren and started shooting. No one was able to stop him. The person was later arrested. After the report was broadcast, the Kosovo Police Inspectorate decided to analyze the situation and investigate what are the Kosovo Police safety defects.

**NOV**  
2014

On November 21st 2014, *Life in Kosovo* revealed problems in the process of tenders in Peja Municipality, because LDK party officials were improperly involved in the process of giving out tenders, which is a violation of the law. BIRN addressed the State Prosecution, sending this information on November 25th. The State Prosecution said that the Basic Prosecution in Peja is dealing with this case, which was confirmed in May 2015 by the prosecutor's office.

On November 27, 2014, *Life in Kosovo* held a debate on the debts of public and private enterprises for water supply tariffs as a result of the negligence of the Ministry of Environment. BIRN journalists found that a person that wants to use water supply is obliged to pay the tariffs. The companies of the regional water supply publicly admitted that they would not obey Kosovo laws, whereas the officials of Water Department in the Ministry of the Environment refused to explain. *Life in Kosovo* invited the director of the water department in the Ministry of Environment, the head-chief of regional water supply "Prishtina", the Association of Water Supply and Sanitation and a journalist for a debate. After the debate the public and the private companies promised to make an agreement with the water supplies and pay off their debts. As a result of BIRN reporting this, the Director of the Water Department resigned from his position.



## BIRN KOSOVO

# Funding in 2014

Through 2014, BIRN continued to rely on the generous support of a wide range of Western governments, independent and public partners to sustain the organization's internal capacity and public impact. The BIRN team is deeply grateful to all of them for their loyal and unconditional support, which further strengthened BIRN's ultimate objective to serve as a watchdog, monitor the work of public institutions and support their reform on path towards meeting the criteria and standards of the European Union.

As BIRN is looking forward to accomplishing its strategic long-term and short-term goals, it hopes to maintain, nurture and strengthen existing relationships with its key donors while continuing to broaden and deepen the funding base. A strong and growing base of support will be essential to continue our work and focus on our main activities,

including but not limited to the following:

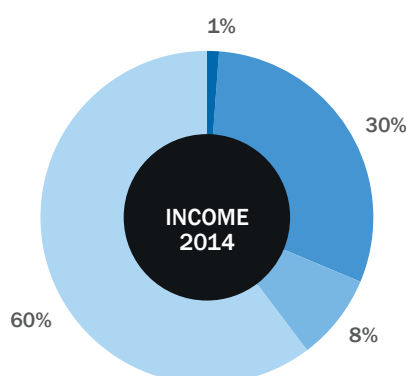
- Production of the weekly current affairs TV debate *Jeta në Kosovë*
- Systematic Monitoring of the performance of public services and production of *Justice in Kosovo* weekly TV program
- Production of electoral debates
- Publication of *Balkan Insight*, *Prishtina Insight*, *Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë* and the Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence

## Western Governments/ Governmental agencies/ Independent and Public Foundations

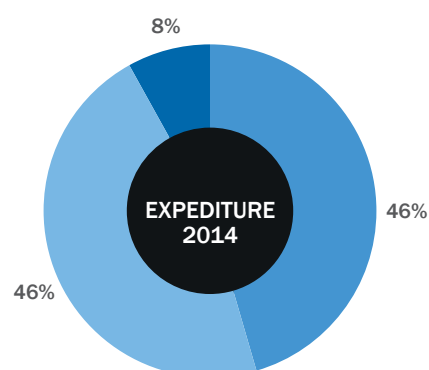
As in the past, BIRN's main financial support came from partners in Western governments. Western governments support continued to hold steady both in absolute and relative terms, representing

60 percent of total funding. A majority of these donors have now provided grants also for the coming years, demonstrating their long-term commitment to and belief in our work. These partners are set to remain a key source of financial support, as we seek to expand cooperation with several of our key existing supporters and foster new relationships with others.

BIRN was also fortunate to count on the financial support of Independent Foundations and Public Institutions, which represent 30 percent and about 9 percent respectively, of total organizational support during the 2014 fiscal year. Alongside Western Governments, Independent Foundations and Public Institutions continue to be a vital source of our support.



- Advertising
- Independent Foundation
- Public Institutions Western
- Governments/Governmental agencies



- Payroll Expenses
- Project Activity
- Operations





**Donors are listed in alphabetical order:**

## PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

- 1. Radio Television of Kosovo ("RTK")** has continued supporting "Life in Kosovo" through 2014 as well. BIRN signed an agreement with RTK for the support of the television show cycle "Life in Kosovo".

## WESTERN GOVERNMENTS/GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

**BIRN Kosovo is generously supported by the following donors:**

- Austrian Development Agency
- National Endowment for Democracy
- The Royal Netherlands Embassy
- Royal Norwegian Embassy
- European Commission Liaison Office
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (MOTT) .
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- European Climate Foundation
- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
- Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI)
- Kosovar Civil Society Foundation
- Journalism Development Network
- BIRN Hub

**1. Austrian Development Agency** - Among other donors that supported Prishtina Insight's publication is the Austrian Development Agency, ADA.

**2. National Endowment for Democracy (NED)** - The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) continued to support BIRN throughout 2014 to foster public debate through Life in Kosovo TV programme.

**3. Swiss Development Cooperation/ HELVETAS/ LOGOS project** – supported BIRN's electoral debates project.

**4. The Royal Netherlands Embassy** - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, through

the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Prishtina, awarded a three-year grant to support the project entitled "Court Monitoring and Reporting Police and Justice Issues."

**5. Royal Norwegian Embassy** - The Royal Norwegian Embassy was the first donor to support Prishtina Insight and continue to do so with an extended grant through 2014. The Embassy also supported the establishment of an Investigative Unit to serve all media products of BIRN.

**6. USAID** –through a fixed grant, USAID supported BIRN in implementing a year-long project aimed at improving transparency and ethics in the justice system in Kosovo.

**7. European Commission Liaison Office** – Strengthening of the Civil Society oversight on the rule of law system in Kosovo. Awarded a grant to BIRN to carry out a project which is a combination of public services monitoring and production of televised debates and report for the "Life in Kosovo" and "Justice in Kosovo" programmes, entitled "Monitoring of Public Services and TV debates".

**8. European Commission Liaison Office** – Media for All - Develop independent, investigative, impartial, unbiased and publicly beneficial journalism in Kosovo. Promoting democratic values through strengthening freedom of speech and independent media in Kosovo.



## INDEPENDENT FOUNDATIONS

1. **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (MOTT)** - Charles Stewart Mott Foundation supported BIRN with a general purpose grant which also finances the public service project as well as *Life in Kosovo*, *Justice in Kosovo* and *Prishtina Insight*.
2. **Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS)** - Kosovo Foundation for Open Society through the project "EU Support for the Implementation of the RAE Strategy (EU SIMRAES)" supported by the European Union subcontracted BIRN to implement the media component of the project. Through the project, 40 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities' young people were trained to use media equipment, media management and pre-career in a three-month course. Further, the youngsters through BIRN mentorship produced three radio-televised documentaries on music, education and employment among these communities.
3. **Rockefeller Brothers Fund** - The Rockefeller Brothers Fund was the first donor to help support and design the very successful project of the monitoring of public services, which began in 2008. It was initially funded only by RBF and then co-funded by other donors such as EU and Dutch government, which allowed for the project to produce "Justice in Kosovo". This RBF support through 2014 as well while the grant renewal brought the extending of the scope of the monitoring, in order to create room for public procurement monitoring. The RBF grant supported specifically the monitoring of courts, education, healthcare and public procurement institutions as well as the BIRN media outlets that partly or entirely deal with these topics.
4. **European Climate Foundation** - Supported the Proposal for video Production "Rethinking economy of energy production".
5. **Friedrich Ebert Stiftung** - Friedrich Ebert Stiftung supported 10 Parliamentary Election Live debates (broadcasting on TV and Live Streaming via Internet).
6. **Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI)** - Centre for Open Data in Kosovo
7. **Instituti Riinvest** - Supported Public Procurement in Kosovo Project during 2014.
8. **International Visegrad Fund** - Supported and collaborated during 2014 regarding Sustainable economy and environment for sustainable development in Kosovo project.
9. **Internews Kosova** - BIRN Kosovo has also received some funds by Internews Kosova in the scope of the partnership in implementing the Supporting Anti-corruption Efforts in Kosovo supported by UNDP in Kosovo and for the production of TEMA televised debates supported by the British embassy in Prishtina.
10. **Kosovar Civil Society Foundation** - Supported 10 Parliamentary Election Live debates.
11. **Journalism Development Network** - The purpose of the Subgrant is to increase the sustainability of the Subrecipient' organization through the programme of The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP).
12. Throughout 2014, BIRN Kosovo has received funds from **BIRN Hub**, which also supports Balkan Insight and the Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence.

## ADVERTISING

BIRN Kosovo takes a very symbolic income from advertising, none of which is for profit but is used to pay the expenses of the operations of running outputs like gazetajn.com and Prishtina Insight.

Prishtina Insight (PI) and Gazeta JNK- By PI newspaper subscription and advertising PI and Gazeta JNK are around 0.48% of total funds were generated as of December 31, 2014..



BIRN KOSOVO

# CHALLENGES AHEAD

We are committed to improving the effectiveness of our programmes and our accountability to beneficiaries and donors. Nonetheless, operating a courageous, independent media organisation is extraordinarily difficult in Kosovo, especially when trying to sustain political pressures, non-transparent government institutions, a high financial burden and diminishing funding opportunities.

While BIRN has continued to successfully raise the necessary funds to finance its extensive operations in 2014, major donors have pulled out regionally, which has resulted in fewer funding sources, though competition for the funds remains high.

Meanwhile, the public broadcaster, RTK, which broadcasts “Life in Kosovo” and “Justice in Kosovo,” has had outstanding payments for more than a year due to BIRN. This has put an incredible strain on BIRN’s smooth production of the programs. However, the organisation strongly believes that it is in the public interest to view these programs even though RTK is behind scheduled payment, so we remain committed to serving the public interest through producing and broadcasting two programs. This has naturally led to strategic endeavors of diversifying the funding base, in

order to mitigate these financial challenges.

A lack of institutional transparency also stands out as a major barrier to BIRN’s journalistic output. BIRN received positive responses to public information requests sent to government entities only in 40 percent of requests.

The rest were rejected based on various justifications. The requested documents are often vital to investigations, especially to those concerning the use of public money. In many key institutions, including the Prime Minister’s office, ignoring requests seems to be the preferred course of action. BIRN continues to be persistent, which in some cases has led to increased transparency in certain areas of the government.

We believe that slowly we are contributing to more transparent governing culture where access to public information is guaranteed, rather than be viewed as a favour to someone. However, for the time being, many investigations likely will continue to be hamstrung by government evasion.

Training our staff on reporting and ethics remains an important priority of the organization. Recent examples in the media

landscape in Kosovo have shown that the powerful have sharpened their means to use lawsuits to put pressure on journalists. While lawsuits are democratic tools to protect personal and professional reputations, BIRN is highly devoted to offer its staff the understanding of professional and legally safe reporting.

Last but not least, another challenge BIRN faces is the lack of action by public officials such as police, prosecution and other agencies in following up the cases that are reported in media. All institutions are legally obliged to act upon receiving information about wrongdoings. Witnessing the inactivity of Kosovar institutions, BIRN has gone one step forward by sending official letters to many institutions asking for concrete action on cases reported.

The response is usually not satisfying; however, BIRN holds regular meetings with officials and writes to them officially in order to ask for more accountability and action towards concerns raised in the media. Slow progress has been noted during 2013 and hence BIRN will continue this practice in the upcoming year as well.



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# WHO ARE WE?

**The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) is the leading investigative reporting organisation in the Balkans, and is a trusted and well-respected civil society actor in the region.**

BIRN emerged in 2004 through a long-term media development project run by the UK-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting. Since 2005, it has worked as an independent non-profit media-training organisation in the Balkans. It specializes in developing and implementing investigative and analytical reporting projects, theoretical and practical training for local journalists, and capacity building of local and regional media.

The BIRN network consists of seven member NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Romania, Albania and Bulgaria.. It has an established editorial presence in Croatia and Montenegro.

BIRN Kosovo, in particular, specializes in organizing current affairs debates that have pushed boundaries in Kosovo by dealing with sensitive, hard-hitting and taboo-breaking topics, sometimes resulting in its journalists being threatened. These debates have pushed for public reform and contributed to increased levels of accountability among elected and appointed officials in post war Kosovo.

Starting with a staff of only three members in 2005, BIRN Kosovo has evolved into a leading media NGO, with a staff of about 120 full-time and part-time employees and contributors at different times, which employs and nurtures the best investigative journalism talent in Kosovo.

## 2014 BIRN KOSOVO ANNUAL REPORT

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