



BIRN
BALKAN
INVESTIGATIVE
REPORTING
NETWORK | KOSOVO

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2015**

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Acknowledgements

Jeta Xharra, head of BIRN Kosovo and guest at the Speak UP 3 conference on Freedom of Expression and Media in the Western Balkans and Turkey, organized by the European Commission on November 4, recalls the progress and the persistent challenges facing investigative journalists since the last conference in 2013.



Why Real Journalists Scare the Balkan Elites

Dear friends, fellow journalists, I refuse to come to Speak UP and complain every two years from this same podium about the state of journalism in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

In fact, from where I am standing here and looking at you, I don't feel miserable about the state of our work at all because I am pleasantly surprised that you are all still pushing and fighting to do your job against a tide of worsening political environments in most countries of the Balkans.

So, for a start, coming here, seeing your faces in the airport and in corridors of this building, I invite you to see what I am seeing: I would like you to recognize and appreciate the fact that there is actually great power behind you/us. Your voices, your cameras and your pens seem incredible valuable and unquestionably powerful to me today. So, if this session is about recognizing progress, then I would say that as a general comment, you look scarier than you did at Speak UP 2013! Note: I didn't say we look prettier, we just look quite a force to be reckoned with!

So, in an outright post-Halloween mood, today I want to celebrate the fact that you, most of you who are mining the information every day, exposing evil and refusing to sell out, have become a scary bunch to the kind of corrupt and often criminal political elites that have grown to rule our Western Balkans.

How do I know you are frightening these elites? It is simple!

By the rise in the campaigns that the politicians and their journo-mercenaries have conducted against real journalists and by the investment they have put into trying to muddy the impact of our stories. The more these attack dogs are let loose, the more I believe there is good work being done all over the place.

I will argue this using three stories by my BIRN colleagues, and I will do so not because I think only BIRN does good work but because I know these cases best and have analysed them long enough to draw a pattern and conclusions about how you can be effective with your journalism.

Three teams of journalists in Serbia, Albania and Kosovo who have followed privatisation deals, public tenders and public spending have received the most attacks in the last year – just when they decided to follow the money of the corrupt elites. I would call this “A Rough Guide of How to Get Yourself Feared” – but also Attacked by Corrupt and Criminal Political Elites.

My colleagues in BIRN Serbia first came under fire when their investigation revealed that for a 51-per-cent stake in the newly founded company, Air Serbia, Serbia paid several times more than what its United Arab Emirates partner paid.

A couple of months later, BIRN published an investigation, which said that Serbia's state-owned power company, EPS, had awarded a contract to pump out the Tamnava mine after the floods to a consortium of two companies with no relevant experience, while the job was then done by other companies, one of them connected to one of the Aleksandar Vucic's friends.

What followed was a year-long campaign by Vucic and his mercenary media,

marking BIRN as a “spy” organization, which culminated on January 10 when Vucic said: “It's important for people to know [who published the investigation],” adding: “They got the money from [Michael] Davenport [head of the EU delegation in Belgrade] and the EU to speak against the Serbian government.”

Since then, the campaign has continued and this is the headline from Yesterday's *Informer*, Vucic's tabloid: “*Kako Strane Vlade Placaju Rusenje Nase Vlade*,” “How Foreign Governments are Paying for the Destruction of our Government”. One of them, the SCARIEST journalist on this page, is Slobodan from BIRN Serbia who was part of the team that wrote the Tamnava mine investigation.

Joking aside, we should seriously analyse the patterns of how the corrupt and often criminal elites react when they are scared of our investigations: they hire mercenary journalists, such as *Informer* and *e-novine* here, and this week they claimed to be coming out with “investigations” into “how BIRN, CINS & KRIK get financed”, so they are simulating a sort of mock “follow-the-money” techniques on us, and are supposedly revealing that we are financed by the mighty, scary...European Union, among other donors. Of course, this investigation is coming out on Monday but BIRN has not been called to be asked about anything; they clearly don't need our side of the story.

This is not my biggest disappointment here. It is beyond disappointment, it is ironic that in BIRN Serbia's case, while there was EU funding before the investigations about airline and Tamnava mine came out, today there is no EU funding for similar investigations.

Maybe I am reading too much into this but I can't fail to notice that in the case

of BIRN Serbia, bullying governments actually managed to scare off some donors from supporting investigative journalism. While this is not the case in other countries I will talk about, I just want to note one recommendation that should come out of this panel. It is that Brussels/the EU should not be scared of investigative journalist. True, Slobodan looks scary on this wanted list, but he is exactly the medicine that his country needs. His country does not need nice journalists, his country does not need mercenary journalists but scary, watchdog and true investigative journalists.

It is true that funding investigative journalism can be as unpleasant as practicing it when you have a bully government, but that does not mean that we should all hide in a safe place.

Moving on to Albania, on June 17 2015, BIRN Albania published an investigation into the criminal pasts of candidates who were running for the local election. Edi Rama, the Prime Minister of Albania, threatened to sue BIRN and the journalists involved in the story. The Socialist Party candidate, Kavaja Rroshi, sent an open letter to all the media, issuing them a three-day ultimatum to pull the story or be sued for 100,000 euro. Rama confirmed Rroshi's threat to sue BIRN.

So, in the story I told you about BIRN Serbia, before I introduced you to the three types of journalists, the scary ones and the mercenary ones, there is the third kind of journalist in our lands these days and those are the nice journalists. Who are they? Well they are the ones who, when Prime Ministers of our countries threaten my colleagues in the media, are too "nice" to bother asking for our side of the story.

So, what happened next? The legal threats against BIRN Albania never materialized. But a new threat ensued when the speaker of parliament, Ilir Meta, a coalition partner of Rama's, said in the October 1 parliamentary session that there was a "Mafioso" conspiracy against him, and blamed BIRN for connecting him to the energy distribution company corruption allegations and to the arrested businessmen, Kastriot Ismailaj.

So again, you see politicians being scared of investigative journalists who investigate them – more than they are scared of prosecutors, more than they are scared of police, more than they are scared of anti-corruption agencies. Some of you real journalists are becoming the demons they want to talk about in parliament, and in their tabloids, and it is to your/our donors that they are coming to bark at when they feel that the dark truth about their money is exposed.

Let's move to Kosovo. More recently, on August 25, BIRN Kosovo published a story that revealed how Isa Mustafa, the Kosovo Prime Minister, awarded a public tender to fix BMW government cars to a company owned by his OWN son.

Two days later, on August 27, the "Express" newspaper, equivalent to Vucic's "Informer" and "e-novine" in Serbia, a portal owned by a former PDK member of parliament (a party in the coalition) decided that in that very week they were going to attack Faik Isphahiu, the executive producer of my programme "Jeta ne Kosove/ Life in Kosovo", by publishing this article which said the following:

- This selfie from Facebook is further proof of what was always suspected... that Isphahiu was working for the Serbian secret services –
- That he had historically worked with Serbian journalists...
- That BIRN's centre is in Belgrade although in fact our hub is based in Sarajevo
- That our staff in Kosovo... is so mixed up with Serbia, that we get paid in dinars!

Maybe this story about my colleague in Prishtina is not so different from the ones in Tirana and Belgrade but there is good news and bad news in how this story ended:

The good news is that Reuters quoted our investigation about Mustafa's son winning the government tender to fix cars, and when the story made it into the international press, it became so big that Mustafa annulled the tender because now it was not "the suspicious local 'scary' guys" but an "international embarrassment". So the good news is we managed to scare him off from doing wrong.

The bad news is that when we complained to the Press Council in Kosovo about this appalling article, full of defamatory language, lies and with no facts, the majority of the Press Council decided that there was nothing wrong with it. Five voted against our complaint and five others who think of themselves respectable media absained from declaring this article unprofessional. Only three voted for the fact that this article was unprofessional!

Most of press council members who think that there is nothing wrong with these sorts of defamatory articles and fact-less discrediting campaigns are sitting among us, attending freedom of speech conferences.

But, there is more good news. In the last six years I have been through two legal

battles and I am amazed to tell you that while EULEX lost one case against five similar mercenary journalists and a rogue mayor, last week we had a legal victory that I believe may create a new precedent in the region.

Three years ago, we asked the Kosovo Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, to give access to the travel expenses paid for by public funds – for the PM and six deputy PMs at a time. He denied us access on the basis that this would endanger the Prime Minister's human rights; more specifically, these documents would reveal his diet and his religion.

We took him to court on this, arguing that the public should have access to bills paid for by public funds. The case took three years, a new Prime Minister, Mustafa, came, and we asked the same of him, to give us this access. He declined.

Last month, the court issued a final decision in our favor. The court considered the PM's office claim unfounded because, it said, "public officials' expenses, especially those of senior officials of state, are funded with money collected from taxes and fees paid by the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo".

Therefore, the court ruled "that citizens have a reasonable interest in being directly informed about every public penny spent".

What can I say, except that I am amazed that in another case against BIRN in 2009, the EULEX judge released those who threatened my team, while a local judge has had the courage to issue a decision FOR transparency against powerful elites now in 2015. This kind of progress is completely unexpected for me. I still can't believe it. But touch the ground, they didn't want to implement this current court decision yet.

And, do you know why we won this case about the bills and the diet of the PM? Apart from running into a one brave judge, we also won the case on appeals because the PM's office forgot to pay a 30-euro fee when they submitted its appeal.

So, there is no rocket science. What we need more of is more solidarity between journalists/us, when we are attacked by the mouthpieces of interest groups. And we keep saying this every year, that in most of our countries, the EU and governments should not let basic freedom of expression rights be sacrificed in the name of short and mid-term political gains or alliances, such as the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, and Russian influence in the region.

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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 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 71 full-time professionals as well as 19 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 90 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

Today, good journalist does not simply report what happens; 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 in election monitoring. This is all part of a philosophy that goes beyond reporting, what we have called **engaged journalism** that shapes public opinion about the kind of state we want Kosovo to become. BIRN effects change through the high credibility of its media outlets, which reached about 122,816 viewers for Life in Kosovo and Justice in Kosovo, 7,392,118 page views for all BIRN's outlets, and more than 2 million unique visitors to all of BIRN's outlets, including our online investigative 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.

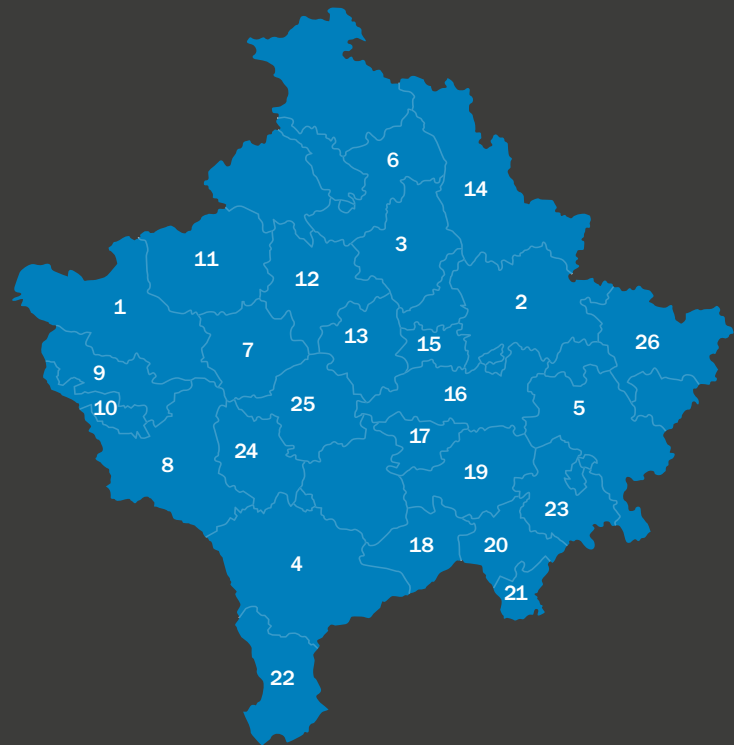
Journalism that trains for excellence

Since it was set up in 2005, BIRN Kosovo, in close partnership with Internews Kosova and BIRN Hub, has trained more than 1000 journalists, court monitors, researchers, civil society activists, and officials of public institutions 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. Our training is inclusive of ethnicities and minorities living across the country. Building capacities of media to deliver professional journalism remains an absolute necessity in Kosovo, which has not only the youngest population in Europe but also the least educated. BIRN Kosovo is a hub for innovation, creativity and quality journalism – which has cemented our position as a trendsetter in Kosovo's media landscape.

BIRN KOSOVO

Operations

Location covered by Monitors of Court and
Municipal Services



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

Diary of impact from BIRN stories

JAN
2015

In January 2015, a citizen reported in KALLXO.com about a Municipal Assembly member of AAK in Klina, who had two jobs, as a local assembly member and as civil servant in Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. KALLXO.com contacted the person, and one week later he resigned from his position as Assembly member.

“Justice in Kosovo” published information about a Prosecutorial Council decision that with five votes for and two against nominated Aleksander Lumezi, the only candidate for head prosecutor of state, to be named by the President. Justice in Kosovo published facts about a blackmail that intended to influence a few members of the Prosecutorial Council. They revealed that Florent Mucaj, the civil society representative on the Prosecutorial Council, was receiving messages that urged him to remind Prosecutor Sevdije Morina about the past of her brother-in-law. Following this reporting, the Prosecutorial Council decided to form an investigative committee for this case.

FEB
2015

On February 5th 2015, Life in Kosovo broadcast an 8-month investigation about the mass irregular firing of employees from ProCredit Bank at a time it was making a profit in Kosovo. On February 11th, KALLXO.com wrote a complaint to the Anti Corruption Agency for possible conflict of interest, since the Prosecutor Ervehe Gashi, which represents the accusation raised against the former employee of ProCredit Bank, is the mother-in-law of the Legal Official in ProCredit Bank. KALLXO.com wrote to the Disciplinary Prosecutor for the possible conflict of interest. On March 2015, Prosecutor Ervehe Gashi pulled out from the case. Members of the public also reported closing their bank accounts with this bank after watching how the bank treated its employees on *Life in Kosovo*.

MAR
2015

APR
2015

In 2012, KOSTT, the Kosovar Electricity Transmission, System and Market Operator, started installing meters. From 2012 to 2014, this tender was cancelled four times. On October 16th 2014, *Life in Kosovo* debated about the problems relating to this tender that were going to affect thousands of households that were having their electricity measured by provisionally rigged energy meters. On October 2014, KALLXO.com wrote a complaint to the Special Prosecution about this case, and the Special Prosecution started investigating it in April 2015.

On April 3rd, *Justice in Kosovo* published information about a scandal in the Prosecution – two prosecutors in the Basic Prosecution in Mitrovica asked for a statement from Gani Geci in the investigation about the murder of R.SH. They asked for this statement on behalf of Syle Hoxha, acting Chief Prosecutor. Vahide Badivuku, the prosecutor in this case, sent the statement to Syle Hoxha, but he sent it back, denying he requested it. The Disciplinary Prosecutor started investigating the two prosecutors and there were disciplinary measures taken against them.

On December 2014, *Justice in Kosovo* reported about a suspicious tender of the Ministry of Health with “Friends Medical” pharmaceutical company. The contract was for medical material and equipment furnishing. But “Friends Medical” had forged documents for the tender. Following our reporting, on January 12th 2015, the Pharmaceutical Inspectorate prohibited Friends Medical from operating, and at the same day the Kosovar Agency for Medical Products and Equipment suspended the license of Friends Medical. The Health Ministry didn’t suspend or cancel the contracts. On April 24th, *Justice in Kosovo* published an investigation about the contracts that the Health Ministry has with “Friends Medical” after getting information through KALLXO.com. After publishing this investigation, the Kosovo Police asked for a copy of the investigation and notified BIRN that they had started investigating.

In April, another investigation by *Justice in Kosovo* showed how a lawyer had offered his cell phone to his client who had been arrested. This happened in the court of Mitrovica. After the reporting, the Lawyers Chamber took disciplinary measures against the lawyer while the Disciplinary Prosecutor of Judiciary Council and Prosecutorial Council are investigating the lack of reaction by court and prosecution officials.

After getting information through KALLXO.com, *Justice in Kosovo* published an investigation about theft of metals in Trepca. The suspects included three employees of Trepca, which were arrested by the police and indicted by the Prosecution in Mitrovica. The case is now in the Basic Court of Mitrovica, and the three employees are back to their jobs after they were recommended to go back to their job by the Labour Inspectorate.

On April 29th, KALLXO.com reported about the violence used by E.B., a teacher, against his 7th grade student. The Education Department in Suhareke moved the teacher to another school after our reporting. On May 2015, KALLXO.com wrote to the Ministry of Education, which then decided to fire the teacher.

MAY
2015

JUN
2015

KALLXO.com received information that certain notaries are violating the law by forcing citizens to pay higher prices for authorizations. The investigating team of KALLXO.com tested out a few notaries and it turns out that some of them were breaking the law when they refused to certify the signatures in authorizations compiled by citizens. During the *Justice in Kosovo* programme, the Kosovo Notary Chamber said that the law allowed for certification of signatures and that refusing to certify the signatures is against the law.

After information received in KALLXO.com and a two-week investigation, *Justice in Kosovo* proved that Emir Azemi, advisor to Assembly Speaker Kadri Veseli was indicted for selling marijuana to KFOR soldiers in 2006. The Basic Court in Mitrovica said that the case is still open, but it cannot be reviewed since the documentation is stuck in North Mitrovica court where they have no access. Emir Azemi resigned from his job while *Justice in Kosovo* was investigating.

On September/October 2014, KALLXO.com received several reports about water tax. On November 14th 2014, *Justice in Kosovo* published findings that the Ministry of Environment failed to collect the water tax from relevant authorities. The problem was that the regional public water companies had unanimously agreed to not obey the Administrative Guidance for the structure of payment of the water tax. On November 24th 2014, KALLXO.com reported through a complaint to the State Prosecution. On November 27th 2014, *Life in Kosovo* discussed the debt that public and private companies had because of the lack of payment of the water tax. On May 2015, the Kosovo Police – Regional Department of Investigations started investigating the water tax. On August 2015, the chief of the water company “Prishtina” was fired by the board of directors.

On May 2015, a citizen reported to KALLXO.com about the “aging of a case.” This is a process which ensures that if a case is left too long without investigating, the prosecution can invalidate the investigation because of old age. On May 8th 2015, *Justice in Kosovo* investigated and reported on this corruption case in Gjilan that was being closed because of old age. On May 11th, KALLXO.com wrote a complaint to the Office of the Disciplinary Prosecutor. This office started a preliminary disciplinary investigation after it received information from *Justice in Kosovo*. On June 22nd, the Office of the Disciplinary Prosecutor notified us that after the preliminary investigation they had started the disciplinary procedure. On August 14th, the Office of Disciplinary Prosecutor informed us that they found out that the judge had mishandled the case and that the report will be presented to the Disciplinary Commission in Judiciary Council.

On April 17th 2015, after reporting in KALLXO.com, *Justice in Kosovo* published information about the suspicious process of a privatised state owned enterprise in the former-Municipal Court in Rahovec. On April 23rd, KALLXO.com wrote a complaint about this case to the Basic Prosecution in Gjakova. The Prosecution said that they have authorized the Regional Investigative Unit in Gjakova to take necessary measures. In August, after we requested information in the prosecution, we were notified that the case had reached the deadline of limitation of persecution.

AUG

2015

SEP

2015

On August 24th 2015, gInK reported that the Prime Minister's Office had applied a closed tender procedure to contract a company to fix the Prime Minister's cars. The company that “won” the tender to fix the prime minister's car, “Mak-car”, is owned by Besnik Mustafa, the son of the prime minister. Three hours after publishing the investigation, BIRN was contacted by the Anti-Corruption Agency. On August 25th, the Legal Office of BIRN wrote to the Anti-Corruption Agency supplying all of its documentation to the agency and raising the case as a possible conflict of interest. On September 16th in a governmental meeting, the Prime Minister Mustafa asked for annulment of this contract. International media such as Reuters also wrote about this story quoting BIRN.

On September 11th, *Justice in Kosovo* published an investigation about the criminal past of the poll dancer Kallashi, (Donjeta Kasumi) and her gang, the “Kobras” who were allowed to run a striptease bar near Prizren despite hundreds of violations for illegal weapons etc. On September 14th, BIRN and I/KS wrote to the Police Inspectorate listing these violations that our team found in local courts. On the same day, the spokesperson of the Inspectorate confirmed starting the investigation based on the information received by *Justice in Kosovo*. Other investigations have been opened by the Disciplinary Prosecutor to argue that the prosecutors had neglected this case.

On September 14th, Gazeta JnK published an investigation “Secret tender for the father.” The newspaper revealed that the municipality of Mitrovica contracted the “Ariani” company, owned by the father and uncles of the Procurement Director for the service of school transport. The investigation revealed also that the rivalling company that bid in this tender did so for a lower price. Regulation Committee for Public Procurement (KRPP) said that the Municipality of Mitrovica hadn't notified them about giving this contract although they are legally obliged to do so. The legal office of BIRN sent complaints to the Anti-Corruption Agency and the Prosecution in Mitrovica. KRPP sent out a warning to the municipality two days after this investigation was published in BIRN's Gazeta Jeta ne Kosove.

On September 18th, a citizen reported about the lack of treatment of a patient for three weeks in the Gyn/Ob Clinic in the main hospital in the country, the University Clinical Center of Kosovo. On September 21st BIRN and I/KS wrote a complaint notifying the Health Inspectorate. On the same day, the KALLXO.com team contacted the complaining party, where the family members of the patient confirmed that the doctors were now taking care of the patient because they had been immediately alerted by our official complaint. On September 22nd, the Health Inspectorate contacted the Legal Office of BIRN for detailed information.

Citizens sent KALLXO.com photos of the horrible conditions of the laboratory in the Regional Hospital in Peja. On May 13th, KALLXO.com published an article about this issue. On May 14th, BIRN and I/KS wrote to the hospital to report the citizens' complaints. On September 8th, the hospital informed us that the renovation in that part is over and they are working on other issues as well. KALLXO.com published an article noting the renovations.

BIRN sued the Prime Minister's office in 2012 for not allowing access to the expenditures done by the then-Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci and his deputies. In the hearing of May 26th, the Prime Minister's Office did not send a representative. The Basic Court of Prishtina decided in favour of BIRN and asked the Prime Minister's Office to allow access to these expenditures.

On May 2014, *Gazeta Jeta ne Kosove* wrote about problems in licensing the first private train operator. The Regulation Authority for Railways licenced "Railtrans" on March 18th 2014 and after 12 days the licence was revoked. "Trainkos," the rival company complained to the Regulation Authority for Railways that "Railtrans" doesn't have a good reputation. The decision to revoke worried the EU Office, who called it an illegal decision that makes competition in the market impossible. In October 2015, the Special Prosecution indicted the Director of the Legal Department of the Regulation Authority for Railways for abuse of his position and official authority.

On October 5th 2014, *Justice in Kosovo* published an investigation about the private messages that were leaked from the prosecution in Gjakova. On November 4th, BIRN and I/KS sent a complaint to the State Prosecution related to this. The person who got the file of the messages admitted that he had received them from the Prosecution in Gjakova, and that he had paid 250 Euros for them. This statement given to "Justice in Kosovo" served as a basis for starting investigations by the prosecution of Gjakova. 9 months after the reporting, the Prosecution of Gjakova indicted Shpresa Bakia – Head Prosecutor in Gjakova. On October 29th she was suspended from work. In December, the Court started the procedures against Bakia.

After the publishing of the investigation of *Gazeta JnK* on October 14th about the subsidizing by the Minister of Public Administration, Mahir Yagcilar, who gave thousands of euros to other members of his party who run NGOs, the Architecture Association reacted. This association addressed the MPs and the Prime Minister for the violations of the Ministry. They used the investigation of *gJnK*, saying that it proves the scandals and misuse of public funds.

On April 6th KALLXO.com reported about an elementary school in Pasome village, which had only five classrooms with two shifts, with a total of 173 students. This school had lack of potable water, toilets in awful conditions, infrastructure problems, lack of chemistry, physics, computer science and biology labs. In October the renovations finished up as a result of the reporting of KALLXO.com

OCT
2015

NOV
2015

On October 22nd 2015, *Gazeta JnK* published an investigation about how the hotels in Prizren had enough power to disregard the limitations of building in Prizren historical center. Several business buildings in the First Zone of the Historical Center of Prizren were built without permission with hotels in particular trespassing their building permissions. On November 5th, BIRN and I/KS wrote to the Prosecution in Prizren. On November 11th, the Prosecution responded and authorized the Unit for Economic Crimes Investigations to interview Officials of the Urbanization and Inspectorate Department in Prizren. These officials are suspected to have committed felonies of misusing their position and official authority.

On November 10th, KALLXO.com received information that a kindergarten in Mitrovica was working without a license from Ministry of Education. A day after the article was published, the kindergarten was licensed.

In October 2015, KALLXO.com received a report which said that the prosecution in Prizren had closed the investigation into the deaths of two children. These two children drowned in the water pits opened by company "Tulltorja." Justice in Kosovo investigated and learned that the prosecutor of the case, Sefer Morina, had pardoned many felonies committed by the owners of the company previously. After *Justice in Kosovo* broadcast their investigation, the prosecution reopened the case. The Disciplinary Prosecutor started investigating Sefer Morina for possible violations of the Ethics Code. Also, the Privatization Agency accused the company of exploiting the state-owned property because "Tulltorja" had no permission to use that property nor to open the water pits where the children died.

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* programme had several highlights during 2015. It started the year with a 9-month investigation into the improper firing of hundreds of staff in the biggest bank in Kosovo, ProCredit Bank. The show ended the year broadcasting an investigation into the mistreatment of patients in paediatric and gynaecological clinics of the primary hospital in Prishtina. *Life in Kosovo* also investigated the mass exodus of Kosovar economic migrants to EU countries, following their journey from villages across Kosovo through illegal travel to Hungary and eventually Germany. This investigation was also published in *The Guardian*. There were multiple debates about the on-going political crisis and the blockage in the Kosovo Assembly as well as the on-going saga at the University of Prishtina. Rector Ramadan Zejnullahu battled to bring credibility to an incredibly compromised institution by attempting to raise the credentials of academic staff in UP, a seemingly non-controversial move which was met with much controversy.

Justice in Kosovo covered the race for chief state prosecutor and the backgrounds of the candidates in the beginning of 2015. Later on, it continued revealing corruption, nepotism, and many other scandals in the field of justice.

Life in Kosovo and KALLXO.com won second place for investigative journalism in an EU competition for the programme "Stent Scandal."

Durim Shala, cameraman of Justice in Kosovo, won the Best Filming Award from the Association of Journalists. And Valdet Salihu won on behalf of Justice in Kosovo for programme "Cannabis Made in Kosovo" for the category "Best reportage."

WEB: KALLXO.com, Gazeta JnK, Kosovo contribution to Balkan Insight and Balkan Transitional Justice

KALLXO.com is BIRN Kosovo and Internews Kosova's fastest-growing product. It is a platform for reporting corruption, irregularities in public services, fraud and more. Initially, KALLXO.com received and researched information from citizens' reports, but soon it turned into a bona fide source of information as a comprehensive news portal. It offers objective, unbiased and justified information. Kallxo also specializes in offering live streaming of protests and other events that occur in Kosovo.

Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë (Life in Kosovo Online Newsmagazine) is BIRN Kosovo's outlet for long stories and investigations. In 2015, Parim Olluri won the "Vangush Gambeta" award from the Union of Albanian Journalists for his investigation "Isa Mustafa's sons win tenders of the Prime Minister Office."

Balkan Insight and Balkan Transitional Justice - 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 2015, all participating countries published an analysis of how Greece's potential exit from the EU would affect the economies of all Balkans countries. Another investigation that included all countries focused on the threat ISIS poses to the western Balkans.

PRINT: Prishtina Insight

2015 was a challenging year for Prishtina Insight. 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 protests in Prishtina and massive migration towards EU – to investigations such as the layoffs of ProCredit Bank. The stories were paired with eye-catching graphic design and stunning photography. Prishtina Insight published its last print edition in November, and has gone online.

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 their implementation or lack of implementation affects ordinary citizens.

The results were published in stories throughout the year and collected in two comprehensive reports, published in April and in November. Negotiators from both Kosovo and Serbia were present for the launches in Prishtina, as well as 120 stakeholders from across Kosovo and Serbia.

Monitoring & Advocacy

In 2015 BIRN monitored public services, supported by the work of 10 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 2015, BIRN actively monitored 902 planned hearings.

Training and media development

BIRN and its partners, Internews Kosova and BIRN HUB have trained more than 1000 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 include 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 present)

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

JANUARY

2015

- On January 8th, the debate was about the culture of volunteerism in Kosovo. To discuss this, Life in Kosovo invited volunteers of different generations and those who support them to talk about the culture of volunteerism in Kosovo.
- On January 15th, Life in Kosovo interviewed Minister of European Integration Bekim Collaku about Kosovo's preparation for visa liberalisation. We also broadcasted a TV report about Albanians living in Ukraine.
- The January 22nd and 29th debates were dominated by the mass protests that turned violent and led to the resignation of Minister for Communities and Return Aleksandar Jablanovic over offensive comments he made while visiting Gjakova, a town where hundred people are still missing from the war.

FEBRUARY

2015

- On February 5th, Life in Kosovo broadcasted the landmark investigation which we worked on for 9 months analysing the questionable layoffs of more than 450 employees from the biggest private bank in the country, ProCredit, at a time when the Bank was making a profit in Kosovo. The program featured the fired employees who spoke of a trend to work out reasons to fire people even if it had to be based on looks. Institutions such as Kosovo Ombudsman, Kosovo inspectorate, Kosovo Central Bank and lawyers of Pro Credit Bank were featured in the investigation. The bank threatened BIRN with legal action which never materialised.
- On February 12th, the programme invited Albanian and Serb panellists to discuss the challenges of implementing justice agreement signed between Prishtina and Belgrade that aims at employing several Serb judges and prosecutors in the north of Kosovo.
- On February 19th, BIRN broadcast an investigation into the mass exodus of Kosovars that were seeking asylum in EU countries in hope of a better life there. Our investigative team followed several families from their home villages in Kosovo. They talked to an employee who closed down a factory where a group of workers had been employed and then followed these migrants on their journey through Serbia, Hungary to other EU countries. A version of this investigation written by BIRN Kosovo Director Jeta Xharra was published in the UK daily paper, the Guardian.¹
- On February 26th BIRN revealed that the president of the Constitutional Court was suspected of falsifying the signature of Robert Carolan, the American judge who is a member of the Kosovo Constitutional Court. The panellists included the Kosovo Ombudsman, a former EULEX employee and legal experts discussed the legal implications of these allegations. [They led to an indictment at the end of 2015].

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/17/kosovans-risk-perils-of-roads-forests-and-criminals-in-chase-for-better-life-in-eu>

MARCH

2015

- On March 5th, Life in Kosovo debated the months-long delay in electing the new chief state prosecutor. This post is extremely important as the new prosecutor is supposed to oversee investigations into corruption, an arena in which Kosovo is stagnating.
- On March 12th, BIRN broadcasted a special programmes from our “Tema” series, a debate using a live TV link between Prishtina and Belgrade. Panellists sitting in both capitals discussed the integration of the so-called ‘parallel structures’ of Serbia in Kosovo institutions.
- On March 26th, Life in Kosovo debated about the lack of funds for main Kosovo festivals after the Minister of Culture, Kujtim Shala, slashed the budgets of multiple festivals around the country.

ARIL

2015

- On April 2nd, Life in Kosovo invited all the relevant parties involved in the movement against the destruction of the “Lumbardhi cinema” in Prizren. It is the main stage where Dokufest, the best regional documentary film festival and a cultural centre throughout the year. The program presented the successful fight of civil society groups in Prizren to keep the cinema through an incredible grass-roots campaign.
- On April 9th, the program broadcasted a summary of the conference which highlighted the findings the just-published BIRN 2014 Court Monitoring report. Representatives of judicial institutions as well as Samuel Zbogar, the EU Special Representative in Kosovo participated in the conference.
- On April 16th, Life in Kosovo challenged two opposition leaders Fatmir Limaj from NISMA and Albin Kurti from Vetevendosje, about the upcoming opposition protest against energy price increases. They also spoke about Trepca, Minister of Justice Hajredin Kuci, Constitutional Court President Enver Hasani, the political pressures on public TV and the planned Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. The interviews were widely discussed because Limaj criticised the public TV for having become the tool of the government while the BIRN moderator reminded Limaj that he too had employed family members in the public TV while he was minister of transport.
- On April 23rd, Life in Kosovo discussed the selection of the chief prosecutor, Aleksander Lumezi, and the expectations civil society have of this new prosecutor. The controversy over the Heikki Wendorf, the EULEX prosecutor who sent a letter president Jahjaga urging her not to appoint Lumezi was also discussed in this program.
- On April 30th, Life in Kosovo discussed the university textbook “Criminalistics” written by Vesel Latifi. It describes rape victims as “females who are easily fooled, careless, thoughtless, and immoral.” Life in Kosovo also interviewed EULEX chief Gabriele Meucci about the findings of the Jacque report on the EULEX alleged corruption affair.

MAY

2015

- On May 7th, *Life in Kosovo* revealed the affair that led to the arrest of three Kosovar officials from the Metrology Agency that were suspected of meddling with the "Kohler" machines that KEDS uses for measuring electricity in households, as well as prosecution pursuit of two former KEDS employees, Turkish citizens linked to the scandal.
- On May 14th and May 21st the program did special reports from Kumanovo, the Albanian town in Macedonia where the infighting between rebels and police led to the deaths of 18 people dying, 8 of whom were police officers. The program on May 21st, *Life in Kosovo* moved to Macedonia for the day, where we interviewed the leader of Macedonian opposition, Zoran Zaev. We also interviewed the family members of the people who were involved in the Kumanovo unrest. We also interviewed an anonymous rebel from what he said was the "National Liberation Army," which participated in this shoot-out.
- On May 28th, *Life in Kosovo* discussed internal elections in the Democratic League of Kosovo, or LDK, one of the biggest parties in Kosovo. The party was about to elect a leader. The main topics were the transparency and fairness of vote. It later transpired that the voting was closed for the media and election monitors.

JUNE

2015

- On June 4th, BIRN broadcast a debate it moderated at the American University of Kosovo where the cultural heritage of Prishtina was discussed. The focus was on revealing what happened to failed restoration projects such as the one of a Prishtina hamam, or Turkish bath.
- On June 11th, *Life in Kosovo* discussed the Matura Exam, after the KALLXO.com team monitored the state graduation exam of thousands of students on June 6th.
- On June 18th, *Life in Kosovo* discussed the challenges of nurturing young sportists for a new country like Kosovo which is allowed for the first time to participate in Olympic Games in Baku. An interview with Dutch Ambassador Robert Bosch was also broadcast on this edition of *Life in Kosovo*.
- On June 25th, *Life in Kosovo* discussed the agreement signed between Kosovo and Serbia with the intention of relieving travellers from Kosovo who use their personal cars from paying a very high and controversial vehicle insurance fee.

SEPTEMBER

2015

- On September 10th, *Life in Kosovo* discussed the new government's fiscal policy as well as the controversial law on strategic investment that is being drafted by the government and was being questioned by civil society representatives.
- On September 17th, *Life in Kosovo* discussed the problems of University of Prishtina with two pro-rectors and two deans discussing the qualifications.
- On September 24th, *Life in Kosovo* did a special debate in the Prizren cinema after the screening of movie "Babai" which was been nominated to represent Kosovo in the Academy Awards category "Best Foreign Movie."

OCTOBER

2015

- On October 1st, Life in Kosovo brought together members of the ruling coalition and the opposition to discuss the way out of the political blockage in the parliament.
- On October 15th, Life in Kosovo discussed the University of Prishtina's rector's achievements and failures during the first year of his tenure. He was trying to bring credibility to the university's extremely compromised credentials.
- That debate was followed by the board's dismissal of the Rector on October 22nd largely because he was not allowing academic advancement based on questionable criteria.
- On October 29th, Life in Kosovo discussed BIRN's victory in a strategic litigation case, following a three-year battle to gain access to government travel expense documents.²

NOVEMBER

2014

- On November 5th, Life in Kosovo showed a series of reportages about the UNESCO Kosovo bid, and the fact that Majlinda Kelmendi, a world champion in judo, had to wear thick woolen socks to train during the winter because of the horrible conditions offered to her for training.
- On November 12th, Life in Kosovo discussed the just published EU Progress Report.
- After a series of violent protests, on November 19th, we debated about how to protest non-violently and creatively with a jazz musician, a rock musician, an opinion columnist and a war veteran.
- On November 26th, Life in Kosovo broadcast the acclaimed BIRN regional documentary film "The Unidentified" which tackled the subject of impunity of the commanders responsible for some of the most brutal attacks of the Kosovo war. After the screening, a debate with 6 panelists discussed what is going on with Kosovo war crimes trials.

DECEMBER

2014

- On December 3rd, Life in Kosovo invited representatives from the police, prosecution, judges and Ombudsperson Institution to discuss whether there is bias in handling the recent arrest of opposition MPs after the 28 November protest.
- On December 10th, Life in Kosovo interviewed Maria Bamieh, a former prosecutor of EULEX, who had come to Kosovo to pick up an award and discussed in particular the privatisation cases she was doing just before her contract was cut short.
- On December 18th, the representatives of civil society and members of parliament of Kosovo clashed over the criticism that both have thrown in each other's direction over the recent crisis in the parliament.
- On December 24th, Life in Kosovo ended the year broadcasting a 6-month investigation by BIRN's health correspondent, Paulina Nushi, into the mistreatment of patients especially in the gynecology and paediatrics units of the main hospital in Prishtina, the QKUK. There were also other good managers of QKUK clinics who have been praised for their treatment of patients.

² <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/birn-wins-legal-case-against-kosovo-pm-s-office-10-29-2015>

**FAST
FACTS**

2015

*Frequency:***Weekly –Thursdays 8p.m***Current Affairs Debates:* **34***Interviews:* **10***Investigative reports:* **2***Views on Youtube:***412,263***Minutes watched:***2,999,960***Facebook page:***30,134 fans**

Jeta ne Komune / Life in the Municipality

It has been two years since the Mayors of Kosovo municipalities have taken office, in accordance with their mandates. During the local elections, BIRN Kosovo and Internews Kosova held debates with the candidates for mayoral seats, where they presented their platforms and unveiled respective plans and promises.

Halfway through their mandate, we've returned to these municipalities in post-election debates all over Kosovo where we broadcast each promise the mayor gave two years ago and see if they kept true to their promises.

Differently from previous debates, in which the audience addressed questions to the Mayor, this time we decided to make our debates in the format of a Municipal Assembly session in order to involve not just the mayor, but the members of the local assembly.

Debates took place in their normal municipal halls. Moderator Jeta Xharra took the role of the Assembly chairperson and then the Assembly members sat in their seats.

These debates are the only debates in the region which systematically visit each municipality since 2007 to hold local leaders accountable.

The series of debates, named Life in the Municipality are transmitted every Sunday from 11 am on the Kosovo public broadcaster RTK.





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 relevant 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.



Dusan Radakovic

Director of ACDC

Briefly, based on our previous experience work with BIRN is the work with high professional organization and people that belong to the very top of professionalism. Always responsible and reliable in working with us, BIRN have gained our full trust. Therefore there is no obstacle that could not be overcome or task that could not be solved.

JANUARY

2015

- On January 9th, Justice in Kosovo did a summary of the challenges that the judiciary system went through in 2014.
- On January 19th, Justice in Kosovo interviewed three out of six candidates for State Head Prosecutor: Agron Galani, Aleksander Lumezi and Laura Pula to offer the public an idea as to what the candidates offered.
- On January 23rd, Justice in Kosovo interviewed the remaining three candidates for Head Prosecutor: Imer Beka, Metush Biraj and Shyqeri Syla.
- On January 30th, Justice in Kosovo discussed the protest about the resignation of former Minister for Communities and Return Aleksandar Jablanovic and the police's reaction during the protest.

FEBRUARY

2015

- On February 6th, *Justice in Kosovo* revealed the story of how Vehbi Braha, chief of finances in the regional water-company of Mitrovica, is under investigations for corruption.
- On February 13th, *Justice in Kosovo* investigated a corrupt affair in school trips organised by the Municipality of Mitrovica. For a student trip to Albania, the municipality had contracted the company "Ariani" whose owners are close family members of the Procurement Director. During this trip a few municipality officials visited the students, and didn't pay for their expenses.
- On February 20th, *Justice in Kosovo* reported behind the scenes of the race for head prosecutor. The Prosecutorial Council decided to propose Aleksander Lumezi as head prosecutor with five votes pro, and two against, since the rest of the candidates withdrew from the race. During this meeting, Sevdije Morina, a special prosecutor, was confronted with tentative blackmail; while Syle Hoxha, former head prosecutor was accused of trying to release his brother, who had been convicted of corruption, from prison.
- On February 27th, *Justice in Kosovo* interviewed Aleksander Lumezi, who was proposed for head prosecutor. Despite being recommended, Lumezi was still not decreed as the state head prosecutor, because of the Constitutional Court's prolongation of the process.

MARCH

2015

- On March 7th, *Justice in Kosovo* reported about the busy week in the judicial system. The Judicial Council raised questions about Parliament's decision to name three new members of the Council. One of them was under disciplinary procedures. Kosovo's prosecutorial council had conflicts about two of their members' mandates, Sevdije Morina and Jetish Maloku. The program also reported on the Special Prosecution investigating Ombudsperson's accusations that the Constitutional Court has forged documents. Four employees in the Basic Prosecution were harmed by falling shelves in the archive. The judges were striking against the government, because of their low paychecks. On top of everything, the new judicial building had been flooded.
- On March 14th, *Justice in Kosovo* continued reporting on the problems of the judiciary system. The Supreme Court took the mandates of two members of the KJC to the Constitutional Court, however these could be annulled, because the EULEX judges weren't present in the meeting. Valdete Daka, a Supreme Court judge and a member of the KJC said that the international judges weren't invited in the meeting because they were in favor continuing the mandates of the KJC members. Enver Peci, head of KJC, called the Supreme Court's actions blackmail.
- On March 20th, *Justice in Kosovo* reported about a truce that had been reached in the Prosecutorial Council after accusations had been made.
- On March 27th, *Justice in Kosovo* reported about the prosecutors' protest, which occurred on the inauguration day of the new Justice Palace, a donation of EU taxpayers combined with a contribution from the Kosovo Government. The prosecutors did not want to move into the new Justice Palace, claiming it didn't fulfil their needs.

ARIL

2015

- On April 3rd, *Justice in Kosovo* published information about a scandal in the Prosecution – two prosecutors in the Basic Prosecution in Mitrovica asked for the declaration of Gani Geci in the investigation for the murder of R.SH. They asked for this declaration on behalf of Syle Hoxha, acting Head Prosecutor of State. Vahide Badivuku, the prosecutor in this case, sent the declaration to Syle Hoxha, but he sent it back, denying he ever requested it.
- On April 10th, *Justice in Kosovo* reported about how the entire judiciary chain failed on a case that may seem unimportant. In Mitrovica, a person was allowed to make a phone call while he was being detained. The judiciary is aware of this violation of the law, but no sanctions were taken about it.
- On April 17th, *Justice in Kosovo* reported on a privatization case being handled by the basic court of Rahovec, even though it should be handled by the Special Chambers on the Supreme Court.
- On April 24th, *Justice in Kosovo* published an investigation about the contracts that the Health Ministry has with “Friends Medical,” a pharmaceutical company that has forged most of its documents in the tender procedure.

MAY

2015

- On May 1st, *Justice in Kosovo* published an investigation about theft of metals in Trepca.
- On May 8th, *Justice in Kosovo* revealed how a corruption case in Gjilan was being allowed to age and therefore closed. This is seen as a deliberate tactic to avoid dealing with corruption cases.
- On May 15th, *Justice in Kosovo* brought details to the irregularities during the law compilations for the Judicial Council and Prosecutorial council. The investigation shows that EU and Kosovo’s Judicial Council’s recommendations that were included in the first draft of the law were erased from other drafts from its way from the Ministry of Justice to the Government. Justice in Kosovo found out that without the knowledge of the members of the commission for compiling the law, the norms that stop judges from being employed in multiple jobs were deleted in a deliberate attempt to allow judges to take multiple salaries – at a time where the entire profession is being criticised for lack of efficiency.
- On May 22nd, *Justice in Kosovo* reported how judges’ and prosecutors’ paychecks were slashed.
- On May 29th, *Justice in Kosovo* interviewed EULEX prosecutors for the details of the investigation and court hearings of the “Drenica Group”. A few days before, the court decided to sentence the “Drenica Group” for war crimes. 2 years ago EULEX arrested Sylejman Selimi – general commander of KLA, Sami Lushtaku – ex-commander of Drenica, and 13 KLA members, under suspicions of war crimes. A few days ago, 11 out of 15 were declared guilty.

JUNE

2015

- On June 5th, Justice in Kosovo transmitted an exclusive interview with a police officer, Fidan Maliqi who was investigating the case of Kosovo Tax Administration (KTA) pardoning a debt worth millions. Maliqi explains that this started in February when a citizen of Prizren reported that KTA had charged him with taxes for a business he didn't know it existed, let alone know that he was the owner of it according to documents. When the Kosovo Police asked KTA, they said that they never pardoned any debts, but they did have a document proving that they pardoned 46 businesses' debts.
- On June 19th, Justice in Kosovo broadcast the programme about notaries violating the law by forcing citizens to pay higher prices for authorizations. The investigating team of KALLXO.com tested out a few notaries and turns out that some of them were working against the law when they refused to certify the signatures in authorizations compiled by citizens. During the Justice in Kosovo programme, the Notary Chamber in Kosovo said that the law allowed for certification of signatures and refusing to do so is against the law.
- On June 26th, after information received in KALLXO.com and a two-week investigation, Justice in Kosovo proved that Emir Azemi, advisor to the Head of Parliament – Kadri Veseli, was indicted for selling marijuana to KFOR soldiers in 2006. The Basic Court in Mitrovica said that the case is still open, but it cannot be reviewed since it is stuck in the building of the court in North of Mitrovica. Emir Azemi resigned while Justice in Kosovo was investigating him.

SEPTEMBER

2015

- On September 11th, Justice in Kosovo started the new season with an investigation that shows how the striptease dancer, Donjeta Kasumi, known as Kallashi, who owns a problematic bar in Prizren, has over one hundred criminal charges with the local courts and police. In spite of that, she and her business continue without impediment.
- On September 18th, in the first part Justice in Kosovo broadcast the findings from an investigation which showed that the Tax Administration in 2007 had sold a confiscated property to Behxhet Haliti from Godanc in Shtime. Even though the Tax Administration in the bid for the property confiscated by "Kombinati Bujqesor" had declared Behxhet Haliti winner on the sum of 85 thousand euros, even 8 years later the latter isn't a legal owner of the property. In the second part of the show, Justice in Kosovo revealed how Kastriot Gashi from village of Kijeve in Malisheva had no path to access his property after a decision of the Municipal Assembly in 2011. This decision was taken on the interest of the high school in Kijeve and the family of Valdet Kryeziu.
- On September 25th, Justice in Kosovo brought an exclusive reportage about cannabis cultivation in Kosovo. In videos filmed in Peja, the Justice in Kosovo team followed the anti-drug units closely in discovering the cannabis plantations.

OCTOBER

2015

- On October 2nd, Justice in Kosovo broadcast part 2 of the actions of anti-drug police units which involved the police action in Gjakova, Vushtrri and Podujeva.
- On October 16th, Justice in Kosovo broadcast a show about the direct connection of politics with rule of law institutions. The investigative teams of court monitors discovered exclusive findings of how a municipal assembly member in Ferizaj is at the same time Head of Supporting Legal Office in the Basic Court of Ferizaj, which is against the law.
- On October 23rd, Justice in Kosovo revealed how the investigations into the deaths of two children in village Serbice e Ulet in Prizren were abandoned. Leotrim and Leonard Bytyqi, 9 and 11 years old, drowned on June 16th 2015 in potholes filled with water in the circumferences of this village, where they lived. The investigation was never followed through.
- On October 30th, Justice in Kosovo discussed BIRN's victory in the court cases against the Prime Minister's Office and Prosecutorial Council of Kosovo in a bid for freedom of information.

NOVEMBER

2015

- On November 6th, Justice in Kosovo focused on how state institutions fail the victims of domestic violence. The show broadcast the tragic confession of Hajrie Aliu, a victim of domestic violence, who had been beaten and by her husband, Enver Zeka, for years.
- On November 13th, Justice in Kosovo broadcast the investigation of three out of four cars that weren't confiscated even though they transported drugs. The four cars were confiscated during an anti-drugs action in Mitrovica, while the investigation by Justice in Kosovo revealed that three of those were let go because of the prosecution's negligence.
- On November 20th, Justice in Kosovo showed how prosecutors got decreed by the President even though they had open disciplinary cases against them and had failed the tests for prosecutors.
- On November 27th, Justice in Kosovo reported on how thieves are stealing emigrants' cars when they come to visit family in Kosovo. Justice in Kosovo broadcast the stories of two emigrants who in the previous summer were victims of car thefts.

DECEMBER

2015

- On December 11th, Justice in Kosovo broadcast an investigation that showed how judges and prosecutors who had violated legal and ethical norms were pardoned by the new laws of the judiciary.
- On December 18th, Justice in Kosovo showed how the prosecutors in Peja – the city with the highest crime rate – often do not have electricity in the new building and they have to go to a nearby house or store to type up urgent requests for detention.
- On December 25th, Justice in Kosovo summarized the biggest challenges of the judiciary during 2015.

2015

FAST FACTS

Frequency: **Weekly: Fridays at 8pm.**Investigative
Reports / Analysis: **38**Exclusive Police
Reports: **35**Fans on
Facebook: **43,853 fans**



MEDIA PRODUCTION

Web Production

Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë (FROM 2011 TO DATE)

During 2015, 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 ground-breaking investigations that expose links between Kosovo institutions and businesses.



Edita Tahiri
Minister for Dialogue

I value BIRN's work and its mission to investigate and make public the important issues for democracy development and functioning of an accountable government in Kosovo. I'm especially grateful for the analyses and monitoring of the Brussels dialogue for which we've had and we will have a close cooperation. Your work has contributed in increasing knowledge about the process and the importance of this dialogue whose purpose is to normalize relationship between Kosovo and Serbia and contributes to peace and stability in the region and in Europe.

January 2015

On January 22nd, Gazeta JnK revealed that “Trainkos,” a public enterprise that manages trains, will be directed by Gelor Shala, who is a family friend of Nazmi Grabovci, PDK MP Adem Grabovci’s nephew. Board members of “Trainkos” say that Shala fulfils all the criteria for this position. Shala was the Financial Director of Nazmi Grabovci’s private company, which won tenders from the government worth millions.

February 2015

On February 6th, Gazeta JnK revealed that University of Prishtina had contracted in June 2012 a private company which offered ridiculously high prices compared to the ones in the market. Gazeta JnK revealed that UP spent 34,283 euros on buying A4 papers, while you can find the same ones for 23,257 euros. UP also spent 10 thousand Euros on buying 6,674 markers which can be purchased for 2,669 euros. The owner of the company “KGT,” Tome Gashi, admitted that he offered manipulative prices in the tenders.

On February 7th, Gazeta JnK published an investigation about the massive layoffs in ProCredit Bank. Over 50 staff members of ProCredit Bank were interviewed by Gazeta JnK, and one of them complained that he had to fire people based on their looks. The prosecution started investigating the top management of ProCredit.

On February 16th, Gazeta JnK revealed that the contract for books worth 3.3 million Euros, signed between the University of Prishtina, the Ministry of Education and Macedonian company “Tabernakul,” was signed in a suspicious way. The

then-rector says that he signed it two days before his mandate was over, on September 28th, however, the date on the contract says that it was signed on October 2nd.

On February 22nd, Gazeta JnK published an investigation about the businessman Ramiz Kelmendi and the company for processing metals “Famipa”. Kelmendi bought this company for 3.5 million Euros in 2011. It is suspected that Kelmendi would make his employees work during the times when the company would be inspected by the Privatization Agency. Gazeta JnK revealed that the contract between these parties didn’t specify the amount of production that the owner had to fulfil and that this favored Kelmendi.

March 2015

On March 11th, Gazeta JnK published an article about how the Office of the General Auditor cancelled their call for applications for deputy-auditor of performance, a position that over 200 people applied for. They justified this action by saying that the criteria weren’t clear. However, many of the applicants believe that this was suspicious.

On March 23rd, Gazeta JnK published an investigation about a library in Gjilan. The EU office in Kosovo donated 2 million euros for building a new library in Gjilan, however they had problems with the contracted company, which asked for an additional 3 million euros to finish their work. The Municipal authorities call this project a failed one. Meanwhile, the old library is in horrible condition and doesn’t fulfil the students and citizens’ demands.

On March 27th, Gazeta JnK revealed that the Ministry of

Environment still doesn’t have data for the water tax even though Naser Bajraktari, head of Water Department in this Ministry had promised that this would be done by January 2015.

On March 31st, Gazeta JnK revealed that an accused procurement official had returned to lead the office of Public Procurement for the Ministry of Environment. Besnik Dermaku is accused of misusing official duty while he was chief of the Procurement Office in the Ministry of Justice.

April 2015

On April 21st, Gazeta JnK published an investigation that found that there are three professors in University of Prishtina who are “Professor Emeritus.” Zejnel Kelmendi, Faik Brestovci and Muje Rugova hold that title. Two of them are former rectors of this university. They earn the same paycheck as regular professors – over 1,429 euros. However, it turns out that these three don’t fulfil the basic criteria to gain that title.

On April 29th, after previous reporting in Gazeta JnK, the rector of University of Prishtina, Ramadan Zejnullahu, decided to stop paying the three professors Emeritus the pay check of 1,429 euros per month. They maintain their title of Professor Emeritus, but will not receive financial compensation. The three professors said that they planned to take this to court.

May 2015

On May 8th, Gazeta JnK published an article about the suspension of the Director of the Water Department in the Ministry of Environment, Naser Bajraktari. He will appear before court

under the accusation that he didn't declare 10 thousand euros in the Anti Corruption Agency. He had gained those 10 thousand Euros through a project in GLZ.

On May 29th, Gazeta JnK published an article that said that the government still hadn't named board members in boards of many public institutions. Over 1,800 people applied for these boards, but the boards still remain without members. Many people see this as a chance for the government to name their close people to the boards.

June 2015

On June 25th, Gazeta JnK revealed that Jeton Sadiku, the owner of Llamkos, is being detained for six months now under suspicions of fraud and damaging creditors. Four years ago, he bought "Llamkos." In 2012 Gazeta JnK revealed that Sadiku is involved in an irregular business and that he is connected to the Russian oligarch Andrej Dobrov. In 2013, Llamkos management notified that they had stopped production, without giving a reason why.

July 2015

On July 6th, Gazeta JnK revealed that during the last 13 years Kosovo insurance companies had profited 130 million euros through fees imposed at the borders. They paid ten times less for compensating damages. However, compensating damages was used as an excuse to not decrease the expensive border fees.

On July 13th, BIRN uncovered evidence that notorious Serb businessman and nationalist Zvonko Veselinovic transported material for a firm owned by prominent Kosovo Albanians linked to the Democratic Party

of Kosovo, PDK. The goods were sold to US construction giant Bechtel and its Turkish partner Enka, the main contractor hired to build Kosovo's biggest ever infrastructure project, the Pristina-Tirana highway. Veselinovic was formerly a member of the now disbanded Serb vigilante group Bridge Watchers, blamed for attacks on Albanians in the divided town of Mitrovica. He admits to playing a major role in the July 2011 unrest. Veselinovic also ferried rocks from the Arena Invest quarry in northern Kosovo until routes were blocked by the barricades he helped create. Arena Invest is owned by three prominent Kosovo Albanians: Pristina's former ambassador to Washington, former Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci's landlord, and a former Kosovo Liberation Army commander – as well as a Kosovo Serb politician.

On July 15th, Gazeta JnK published an investigation about the lack of monitoring and management of Medical Equipment in Public Health Institutions. These equipments, especially the CTs, are most of the time out of service, which results in patients resorting to use of equipment of private institutions which are expensive for the average citizen.

August 2015

On August 24th, Gazeta JnK reported that the Prime Minister's Office had applied a closed tender procedure to contract a company to fix the Prime Minister's cars. The winning company, "Mak-car," is owned by Besnik Mustafa, the son of the current Prime Minister.

September 2015

On September 14th, Gazeta JnK published an investigation "Secret tender for the father." The municipality of Mitrovica had

contracted "Ariani," a company which was owned by the father and uncles of the Procurement Director, in order to transport children to school at a higher cost from a rival bidding company who bid for less. Regulation Committee for Public Procurement (KRPP) said that the Municipality of Mitrovica hadn't notified them about giving this contract to their relative.

October 2015

On October 6th, Gazeta JnK revealed that Rafet Rama, MP of PDK, is also an advisor in the private company "Capital." There are two laws which are supposed to prevent a MP from holding this kind of position. The company where he is an advisor is a rival of the public company PTK, where his wife is a high official. Until last week these two companies were rivals in the student frequented area, the Canteen campus. PTK closed down their office there which made "Capital" have monopoly in that area.

On October 13th, Gazeta JnK revealed that the world champion, Majlinda Kelmendi, lacks even basic conditions to train for the Summer Olympics. She complained about having to train in minus 10 degrees, wearing five layers of clothes.

On October 22nd, Gazeta JnK revealed that many business buildings that are located in the First Zone of Historical Center in Prizren have troubles with the law. There are businesses that have exceeded their permit, and there are hotels that were built without any permission. Powerful businessmen have defeated the authorities who do not want to put an urban order in this Historical Zone.

On October 27th, Gazeta JnK revealed that the private company that furnishes oil to the Municipality of Skenderaj is owned by Musaj and Hajdar Hajdari. The first is a PDK MP in the Municipal Assembly of Skenderaj, while the second one had the same position before 2007.

November 2015

On November 8th, Gazeta JnK analyzed the profiles of new board members of public enterprises who were named by the current government. LDK managed to get more people into KOSTT, the Kosovar Electricity Transmission, System and Market Operator, compared to other parties. The head of KOSTT will be Drita Konxheli Radoniqi, who in 2015 was elected as a member of the General Council of LDK. The law for public enterprises requires that people who were selected in political party organs in the past 36 months not be named to public enterprises' boards.

On November 11th, Gazeta JnK revealed that most of the members of the Board of Directors of "Infrakos," named by the Mustafa Government, are politically connected. The board will be led by Enver Aruqaj, former advisor of Hashim Thaci and Bajram Rexhepi, when these two held the post of prime ministers. Another member is Fellenza Xhelili-Fiqi, who is the daughter of a former PDK MP. Another member, Nexhat Dedja, is a PDK MP in the Municipal Assembly in Mitrovica.

On November 20th, Gazeta JnK published an article that said that the authorities had bought tear gas to disperse protesters from a company whose owner is the Mayor of Obiliq, Xhafer Gashi from AAK, one of the opposition parties, which are protesting.

On November 23rd, Gazeta JnK revealed that the Airport of Gjakova, which is not functional, will be run by Naser Canolli, a member of Directing Council of PDK since 2013. Meanwhile the three other board members are LDK members.

December 2015

On December 1st, Gazeta JnK revealed that three board members in PTK are tied to PDK, and two others are tied to LDK. Isa Mustafa, the prime minister, had promised during the election campaign that he wouldn't name politically connected people to boards of enterprises. However, things didn't change when he came to power. Halit Isufi, who was head of board during Hashim Thaci's mandate, will continue in this position during Mustafa's as well. Rushan Ceka and Hysen Fazliu are also PDK members.

On December 1st, Gazeta JnK revealed that the contract worth hundreds of thousands of Euros signed between the Kosovar Bureau of Insurance (BKS) and the private company "Alt3c" has caused dissent in the multimillion euro insurance industry. Two companies have made accusations that this contract creates a 'typical monopoly.' Through this contract BKS obliged all companies to use the same system created by this private company. The Central Bank, which is the supervising authority of BKS, has concluded that this contract has a high cost and the market wasn't studied for this service.

On December 8th, Gazeta JnK published an article that revealed that Hyrije Koraqi, a candidate for assistant professor at the Agriculture Faculty had been turned down by Arben Haziri, head of Evaluating Committee because he said she is too "stubborn." Koraqi is a PHD candidate and has eight years of experience.

On December 17th, Gazeta JnK revealed that three board members in the Regulation Office for Energy have political pasts in both parties in power.

2015

FAST FACTS

Visitors:

689,136

Unique Visitors:

450,030

Page views:

1,017,627

Daily Visits:

2,778

Facebook fan page:

249,786 fans

Twitter:

8,206 followers



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 2015, BIRN's journalists produced 3820 news pieces, and more than 492 premium articles (154 analysis, 81 comments, 161 features, 63 interviews, 47 investigations, 17 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 5,108,564 page views, out of which 1,329,548 unique visitors. 45.9% per cent of visitors return (1,109,077), and 54.1% are new visitors (1,305,724).

The countries from which Balkan Insight had the most visits are: United States, Serbia, UK, Macedonia, Kosovo, Germany, Australia, Canada, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

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's page from the last year's 26,505 to 36,865. Balkan Insight's Twitter profile went from 13,495 followers to 18,000.

In 2015 Balkan Transitional Justice programme published 822 articles, out of which 130 analyses. These articles are published in four languages.

In this reporting period the BTJ team has released 12 radio shows. 110 radio stations in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro broadcast the Radio programme Roads to Justice on a monthly basis.

BTJ also produced a documentary. The Unidentified is a feature-length documentary which reveals that the commanders responsible for some of the most brutal attacks of the Kosovo war have never been indicted for their crimes.

The result of a two-year-long investigation, the documentary names the officers who ordered attacks on villages in the area around the town of Pec during the 1999 war and those who were involved in the removal of victims' bodies to mass graves at the Batajnica police centre near Belgrade in Serbia.

Sixteen years after they committed the crimes, they live peacefully in the Serbian capital, and despite the evidence that exists, they have not been prosecuted. For the first time, the story is told by both victims and perpetrators, people who lived through some of the worst massacres of the Kosovo war, when more than 120 Kosovo Albanian civilians were killed in the course of a few days.

This documentary was shown in Prishtina by BIRN Kosovo and was followed up by a panel discussion of prosecutors, journalists and human rights advocates who discussed war crimes trials in the Balkans, specifically Kosovo.

PRINT

PRISHTINA INSIGHT

(from 2008 to date)

2015 was an ambitious and challenging year for Prishtina Insight (PI). PI continued focusing on unforgettable long-form journalism, building each edition around a cover story. These stories spanned from human interest – such as the experience of asylum seekers from Kosovo in Western Europe to people seeking asylum in Kosovo – to a final long-form print issue focusing on the rapid growth of Prishtina. They were paired with eye-catching graphic design and stunning photography.

- In a January edition, PI published an investigation on Kosovo citizens following the money to war zones. Most of these people first worked on the US Army base in Kosovo, and are now working on construction sites for the US Army in active war zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

- In another January edition, PI published an article discussing the reasons behind the large Prishtina protest at the end of January and what went down that day.

- In February, PI published a cross-border investigation about the massive migration of Kosovo citizens to EU countries.

- In March, PI published an investigation on the layoffs of the biggest bank in Kosovo, ProCredit Bank.

- In March, PI published a feature about an ethnic Serb in the Kosovo Security Force.

- In April, PI published an article about the car flea market in Prishtina. According to statistics, the average age of a car in Kosovo is 18 years old, while the average age of a car in Germany is 8 years old.

- In April, PI published a feature about the lack of recognition of diplomas between Kosovo and Serbia which is hurting both of these countries' minorities.

- In May, PI published a feature on the lack of marijuana in Kosovo which is a direct result of the crackdown of marijuana in Albania.

- In June, PI focused its cover stories on Macedonia and the recent violent fighting that occurred in Kumanovo.

- In July, PI published a couple of stories on the refugee crisis in Europe and Balkans.

- In July, PI published an investigation in the hysteria that occurred after five men were arrested near Badovc Lake, the main water tank of Prishtina, on suspicions of acts of terrorism and trying to poison the lake.

- The following months, PI published a series of four editions focused on the four parts of Kosovo: North, South, East and West, with stories of people from these parts and places to eat.
- In December, PI published its most ambitious project yet – a book-like magazine focused on the growth and evolution of Prishtina since the war. The issue also featured a comprehensive guide to Kosovo wines.
- After the issue was published, PI editorial staff marshalled forces to turn a print product into an online website, which launched in early 2016 as PrishtinaInsight.com.

PI facts:

Prishtina Insight at a glance

Frequency: Every 2 weeks

Editions: 15

Pages: 16-24

Stories: 77

Longform Stories: 20

Circulation: 2,000 copies in print



Marko Duric

BIRN Kosovo has established itself as a watchdog of social processes in Kosovo, and this benefits and the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Prishtina. Particularly important is the monitoring of the dialogue between Belgrade and Prishtina, conducted by BIRN and other organizations within the “Big Deal” initiative. As a non-governmental organization, BIRN has promoted freedom of speech, human rights, transparency of processes and democratic values in Kosovo.



BIG DEAL
Split Asunder
Civic Oversight of the Kosovo-Serbia Agreements

MONITORING AND ADVOCATING

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

In 2013, 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. 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 comprehensive reports, published in April and in November.



“BIG DEAL – Lost in Stagnation” was published on April 2015.³

It is the result of more than 80 interviews with key stakeholders including negotiators, politicians, municipal officials, professors, as well as ordinary citizens. Implementation of the normalization agreement between Kosovo and Serbia has been patchy, with only four of the 17 agreements being put into action since 2011.

At the launching conference on April 24, Kosovo Deputy Prime Minister Edita Tahiri spoke about the successes and challenges of implementing the agreements, as did members of the diplomatic community including EU representative Samuel Zbogar and British Ambassador Ruairi O'Connell.

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 the two countries, and yielded more than 50 articles in Kosovo and Serbia.

“BIG DEAL – Split asunder” was published in December 2015.⁴

It is the result of more than 100 interviews with negotiators at the Brussels negotiations, local politicians, judges and ordinary people. It was conducted over a period of six months in Kosovo and Serbia.

The launch of this report occurred on 1st of December 2015 and representatives of Kosovo and Serbian government, Edita Tahiri and Dejan Pavicevic, spoke about the research and on the ongoing crisis precipitated by agreements signed in April as part of the dialogue.

Other panellists included Samuel Zbogar, EU Special Representative in Kosovo, Ruairi O'Connell, British Ambassador to Kosovo Dusan Radakovic, from ACDC NGO in Mitrovica, Haki

Abazi from Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Tanja Maksic, programme manager of BIRN Serbia, and Bodo Weber from the Democratisation Policy Council. 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.

A high-level agreement between the two prime ministers, signed August 25th 2015, focused on energy, telecommunications, Association of Serbian Municipalities and an arrangement for the Ibar river bridge. This agreement, specifically the Association of Serbian municipalities caused an uproar and dissent in Kosovo citizens and opposition, which led to a blockage of parliament for many months and protests throughout Kosovo.



Dajana Berisha
Head of Press Council

Provoking controversy in Kosova is **“Big Deal”**! Producing high-quality analytical investigative reports is **“Big Deal”**! Educating and empowering citizens to scrutinize political candidates during live debates at Jeta in Kosove, is **“Big Deal”**! Contributing to the establishment of a culture of challenging local and international institutions demanding transparency and accountability is **“Big Deal”**! Cooperating with BIRN has been a journey of learning and inspiring for FIQ!

3 <http://birn.eu.com/en/file/show/ENG-publikim-BIGDEALWEB.pdf>

4 [http://birn.eu.com/en/file/show/ENG-publikim-BIGDEAL3web%20\(1\).pdf](http://birn.eu.com/en/file/show/ENG-publikim-BIGDEAL3web%20(1).pdf)



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.



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 expenditures 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.

As a result of this research BIRN published the **“Annual Public Procurement Monitoring Report: Hidden Tenders”**⁵ in February 2015. 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 2015, 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 ignore open procedures and harm free competition.

BIRN's report contains findings from monitoring 180 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.

Findings of this report were presented in a conference organised on 9th of February 2015 where stakeholders related to public procurement bodies in Kosovo participated in a round-table discussion, commenting on the findings of the report:

1. Safet Hoxha, Head of Public Procurement Regulatory Commission
2. Besnik Bislimi (Vetevendosje), Head of Parliamentary Commission for Supervision of Public Finance
3. Ali Sadriu (LDK), Vice-president of the parliamentary Commission for Supervision of Public Finance
4. Hajdar Beqa (PDK), member of the Parliamentary Commission for Supervision of Public Finance
5. Mursel Raca, Executive Director of the Central Procurement Agency
6. Artan Venhari, Deputy Auditor General
7. Haki Abazi, Program Director for Western Balkans, RBF
8. Tomas Gnocchi, head of the division for politics, economy and European Integration in the EU Office in Kosovo
9. Agron Demi, Head of GAP Institute
10. Alban Haliti, Head of INPO
11. Parim Olluri, editor of Gazeta Jeta ne Kosove

Public procurement in Kosovo faces various challenges, ranging from inadequate budget planning

to political interference and corruption. According to this report, there is a lack of adequate planning of costs, preparation of tender dossiers and finalization of contract awards.

The next report on Public Procurement monitoring will be published in the first quarter of 2016.

Judiciary:

For the eighth year in a row, BIRN continued monitoring trial proceedings in Basic Courts, the Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court. The monitoring covered regular courts in 26 Kosovo municipalities (Basic, Appeals and Supreme Court.) 902 court sessions were monitored during 2015.

As a result of the court monitoring, on April 2nd, 2015 BIRN held a roundtable to launch the draft of the 2014 Annual Court Monitoring Report.⁶ 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 representatives of Kosovo Judicial Council, Supreme Court of Kosovo, State Prosecutions office, Basic Courts Kosovo Chamber of Lawyers. The officials that attended the roundtable gave feedback on the report and pledged to work on reducing the irregularities spotted during 2014.

5 <http://birn.eu.com/en/file/show/BIRN%20Kosovo%20procurement%20-%20ENG.pdf>

6 http://birn.eu.com/en/file/show/BIRN%20report%202014_ENG_web.pdf



Among the irregularities noted in the report was 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. However, there were so many problems with the Palace of Justice, with elevators getting stuck, and the Palace being flooded whenever it rains. 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. Thus, a few judicial institutions were left out from this Palace.

Among numerous procedural violations during this year, BIRN identified violations in court sessions 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 three years now, and BIRN has been monitoring them for two years now. 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 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.



**Ambassador
Jean Claude Schlumberger**
Head of the OSCE Mission

“As a diplomat in Kosovo for several years now, I read and follow many media outlets available in English, therefore I can say that BIRN news reports definitely help get the full and clear picture.

BIRN remains our partner in improving the freedom of expression and freedom of the media in Kosovo. With its commitment to conveying the voice of the people, BIRN Kosovo serves as a good example worth following.”



Azem Guri
Ministry of Education

KALLXO during the state matura exam, reported and monitored the entire process of the exam with a high credibility and unbiased and professional reporting. This kind of cooperation will continue in the future. MEST is grateful for the activities related to the Matura Exam



Training and Media Development

Internews Kosova, assisted by BIRN Kosovo, organized five sensitization and information sharing workshops in 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 workshops with the targeted municipalities.



I/KS organized workshops in April, May and September with youngsters of ages 16-21 in Municipalities of Prizren, Gjiilan, Mitrovica, Peja and Ferizaj on the topic *“Active citizenship through the use of social media.”* These were attended by a total of 90 people. The participants were members of Local Youth Action Councils, Student organizations and Youth Centers. The workshops were held at the premises of LYACs and Youth Centers. All of these workshops have been facilitated by the social media editor of KALLXO.com, who was able to instruct the group about how to use the KALLXO.com platform to report irregularities in their communities. Through various case studies, participants were taught about the importance of social media in social and humanitarian activities, organizing protests, and creating a common voice.

BIRN organized two intensive one-week trainings to build capacities of local journalists of both Albanian and Serbian media outlets in Kosovo as a part of Media for All project. The first one was held in Prevalle in the Sharr mountains, from May 22 to 27, and the second one was held in Dragash from November 10 to 14. These trainings were facilitated by local, regional and international experts who offered their insight and expertise in investigative journalism and other topics such as legal frameworks for journalism, access to public documents, building TV investigations etc.

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

BIRN regularly holds 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 new monitors who joined BIRN in 2015.

On November 15-16, Meirion Jones, former senior journalist from the BBC who worked with BBC Newsnight programme held a training in BIRN's office on the topic of investigative journalism.

On December 4th, Ervin Qafmolla, an editor in BIRN, held an on-the-job training on the reporting standards of BIRN.

On the scope of Media for All project, BIRN offers on-the-job trainings for journalists who are in the process of doing their investigations for this project.

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.



Mary Aguirre

Public International Law
and Policy Group

“BIRN’s work is essential to advancing the rights of Kosovo’s citizens. Their courage and professionalism has propelled them to take on the tough issues for the betterment of the country. Their projects with the Public Law and Policy Group have had a significant impact on Citizen’s rights.”



Bodo Weber

Democratization Policy
Council

BIRN Kosovo is not only part of the most important English language media service on the Western Balkans, BIRN network’s Balkan Insight. What’s more, with its journalistic work inside the country it decisively contributes to the astonishing fact that Kosovo, despite the major deficiencies in democracy and the rule of law, has one of the most pluralistic and free media landscape in the region.



SUMMER SCHOOL FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM:

From August 23 to 29, Furtuna Sheremeti, Fitore Metbala and Paulina Nushi from BIRN Kosovo attended BIRN's Summer School of Investigative Reporting in Durres, Albania, which was organized by BIRN. They were trained by Blake Morrison, investigative projects editor at Reuters in New York, Miranda Patrucic - lead investigative reporter with the Center for Investigative Reporting in Sarajevo and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, OCCRP and Mar Cabra - head of the Data & Research Unit at the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Access to public documents: During 2015 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 sent to 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 2015 around 100 official requests to the public institutions were submitted. What characterized this year was BIRN's legal victory against the Prime Minister's Office

and Prosecutorial Council for access to public documents.

UNIVERSITY LECTURES

On June 3, BIRN held a talk at the Faculty of Journalism of University of Prishtina where Jeta Xharra spoke to students about investigative research methods. Xharra also spoke about the opportunities for journalism students to pursue internships in media outlets through Media for All project.

On November 24th and 25th, Jeta Xharra spoke to students of two private Universities, AAB and Univerzum, in a series of lectures organised by civil society during the gender equality week. Xharra also spoke about the opportunities for journalism students to pursue internships in media outlets through Media for All project.

LEGAL AND ADVOCACY DEPARTMENT

Strategic litigation cases

BIRN jointly with the "Justice and the People" campaign held a roundtable on October 29th to declare their legal victory against the Prime Minister's Office for access to public documents.⁷ BIRN had requested access to documented foreign travel expenses of the former Kosovo PM Hashim Thaci, who now serves as vice-prime minister and foreign affairs minister, and the same information from the current Isa Mustafa government.



Sazan Ibrahim

Kosovo Municipality Association

Kosovo Municipality Association (AKK) has had a great cooperation during 2015. We hope that this cooperation will be empowered in the upcoming years especially related to functioning of local power in the Kosovo Republic and with challenges that the local government faces in implementing competences that have to do with improving citizens' lives.

⁷ <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/birn-wins-legal-case-against-kosovo-pm-s-office-10-29-2015>



BIRN also requested the same information from six deputy prime ministers from the Thaci government and four deputy ministers of the current Mustafa government. The PM's office denied access to such information, arguing that it could infringe the privacy rights of public officials because invoices for food and drinks could reveal religious and dietary information about the individuals.

However the Prishtina court decided that this claim is unfounded because public officials' expenses are funded with money collected from taxpayers' money.

The "Justice and the People" campaign is implemented by the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC), the Center for Legal Aid and Regional Development (CLARD), and the law firm of Sejdiu & Qerkini, with support from the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG)

Legal follow-up of citizen reporting cases in Kallxo

Kallxo.com is an anti-corruption social media platform established in April 2012 by Internews Kosova in partnership with BIRN Kosovo. Since its launch, Kallxo.com platform has received 4,776 reports from citizens who report on the basis that their reports will be followed up by two teams, a) teams of investigative journalists who will produce the media story and b) teams of legal people who will present the legal argument of the case to the relevant authorities.

The citizen reports are divided into five main categories: corruption, conflict of interest, elections, fraud, municipal services and other. Internews Kosova constantly reviews the cases reported on KALLXO.com and verifies them on a daily basis.

The reports that are sent to www.kallxo.com are followed up by investigative teams who consist of monitors in the field, journalists, and then by the legal office.

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

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.

Out of 242 complaints, BIRN, received only 97 answers. The following are the answers with the most impact:

- On February 11th, KALLXO.com wrote a complaint to the Anti Corruption Agency for possible conflict of interest, since the Prosecutor Ervehe Gashi which represents the accusation raised against the former employee of ProCredit Bank, is the mother-in-law of the Legal Official in ProCredit Bank. KALLXO.com wrote to the Disciplinary Prosecutor for the possible conflict of interest. On March 2015, Prosecutor Ervehe Gashi was pulled out from the case of ProCredit Bank.

- After KALLXO.com wrote to the Disciplinary Prosecutor for the lack of investigation in the deaths of two children in Prizren, the Disciplinary Prosecutor started investigating the Prosecutor Sefer Morina for possible violations of the Ethics Code.

- After Gazeta InK published an investigation about the Procurement Director in Mitrovica giving his father a secret tender, the Basic Prosecution in Mitrovica started investigating.

Overall, during 2015, BIRN in cooperation with its partner Internews Kosovo **followed up 242 complaints backed by evidence.** In addition, due to the lack of response by relevant institutions, KALLXO.com heightened the pressure by sending 72 confirmation-follow-up letters with additional information, after the initial complaints were not addressed, to these institutions:

FOUR COMPLAINTS TO ANTI CORRUPTION AGENCY	ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF SUHAREKE
NINE COMPLAINTS TO SPECIFIC MUNICIPAL DIRECTORATES	THREE COMPLAINTS TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF PRISHTINA
TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE POLICE INSPECTORATE	ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
FIVE COMPLAINTS TO THE JUDICIARY COUNCIL	TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
THREE COMPLAINTS TO THE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE FOR VERIFYING THE STATUS OF MARTYRS	ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF PEJA	TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE
TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF GJAKOVA	TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE
THREE COMPLAINTS TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF MITROVICA	TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE
EIGHT COMPLAINTS TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF VUSHTRRI	THREE COMPLAINTS TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY
ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF MALISHEVE	FIVE COMPLAINTS TO THE KOSOVO POLICE
ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF DECAN	FOUR COMPLAINTS TO THE STATE PROSECUTION
ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF FERIZAJ	THREE COMPLAINTS TO BASIC PROSECUTIONS
ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF KLINA	TWO COMPLAINTS TO THE REGIONAL PEJA HOSPITAL
ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF MAMUSHA	THREE COMPLAINTS TO THE GENERAL AUDITOR
ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF OBILIQ	ONE COMPLAINT TO THE DISCIPLINARY PROSECUTOR
ONE COMPLAINT TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF PRIZREN	

BIRN KOSOVO

Awards:

Parim Olluri, editor of Gazeta Jeta ne Kosove, won an award “Vangush Gambeta” by the Union of Albanian Journalists for his investigation “Isa Mustafa’s sons win tenders of the Prime Minister Office”.

Behar Mustafa, journalist for Justice in Kosovo program, was awarded “Best Journalist of 2015” by the Association of Journalists of Mitrovica. Naser Fejza, TV cameraman for BIRN was awarded “Best cameraman of 2015” by the same association.

“**Life in Kosovo**” and **KALLXO.com** won second place for investigative journalism from the EU for their programme “Scandals of doctors with stents.”

BIRN and **I/Ks journalists** won another three awards by the Association of Journalists in Kosovo for 2015:

Petrit Kryeziu, court monitor based in Prizren won “Best Culture Story” for his article “Prizren ruled by hotel owners.”

Durim Shala, cameraman of Justice in Kosovo, won Best Filming.

Valdet Salihu, producer for Justice in Kosovo, won on behalf of Justice in Kosovo for programme “Cannabis Made in Kosovo” for the category “Best reportage”.



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

Regional partnerships

22. BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina
23. BIRN Macedonia
24. BIRN Serbia
25. BIRN Regional
26. OCCRP
27. TV Aldi, Presheve

International cooperation and partnerships

28. European Climate Foundation
29. Frontline Club
30. Saferworld
31. SCOOP
32. Sierra Club
33. Thomson Reuters Foundation

BIRN Kosovo is generously supported by the following donors:

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

BIRN KOSOVO

Funding in 2015

Through 2015, 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:

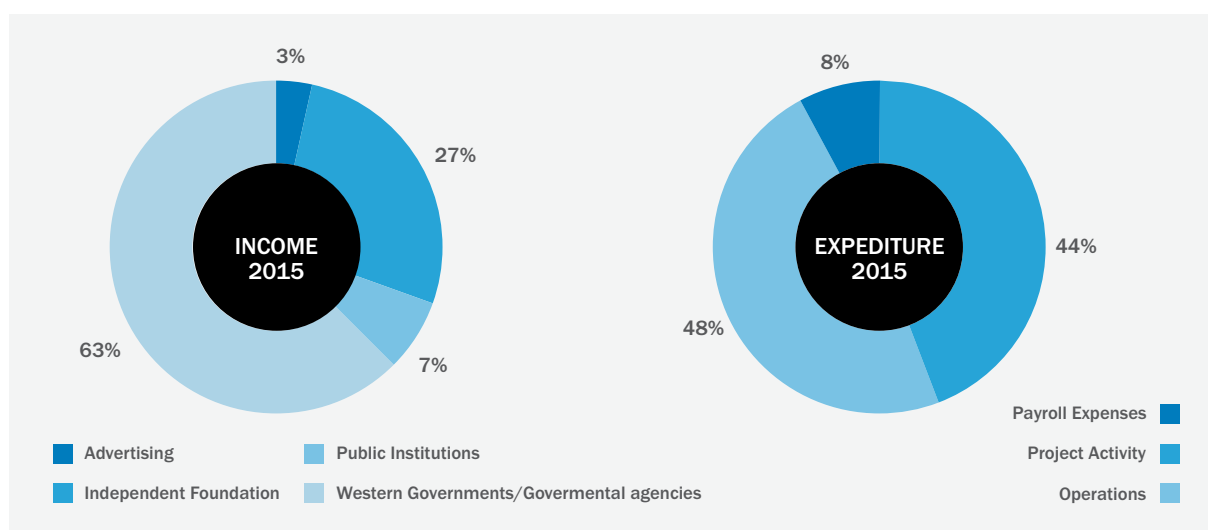
- Production of the weekly current affairs TV debate *Jeta në Kosovë*
- Systematic Monitoring of the performance of public services and production of *Justice in Kosovo* weekly TV program
- Production of electoral debates
- Publication of *Balkan Insight*, *Prishtina Insight*, *Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë*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

Western Governments/ Governments and agencies/ Independent and Public Foundations

As in the past, BIRN's primary financial support came from partners in Western governments.

governments' support continued to hold steady both in absolute and relative terms, **representing 63 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 27 percent and about 7 percent respectively**, of total organizational support during the 2015 fiscal year. Alongside **Western Governments, Independent Foundations and Public Institutions** continue to be a vital source of our support.





Donors are listed in alphabetical order:

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

- 1. Radio Television of Kosovo ("RTK")** has continued offering the space for broadcasting "Life in Kosovo" and "Justice in Kosovo" through 2015. BIRN signed an agreement for a contract which obliges RTK to pay for half of the production of the programmes but to this day, RTK is more than two years behind with payments to BIRN for its programming.

WESTERN GOVERNMENTS / GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:

- 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. **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 2015 as well 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, public procurement and implementation of the agreements signed between Serbia and Kosovo
3. **Internews Kosova** – BIRN Kosovo has also received some funds from 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.
4. **Kosovar Civil Society Foundation – KCSF** supported 10 Post-Election Live debates.
5. **Advocacy Training and Resource Center** – ATRC supported BIRN's project of empowering women to seek their inheritance rights.
6. **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency** – SIDA supported BIRN throughout 2015.
7. Throughout 2015, 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 gazetajnk.com and *Prishtina Insight*.

1. *Prishtina Insight* (PI) and *Gazeta JNK*- PI newspaper subscription and advertising PI and *Gazeta JNK* are around 3% of total funds were generated as of December 31, 2015.



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.

The public broadcaster, RTK, which broadcasts *Life in Kosovo* and *Justice in Kosovo* has continued to fail to pay for the production of BIRN programs, despite having a contract which stipulates these financial obligations. BIRN TV programs are supposed to be partly financed by donors and partly by RTK. The lack of payments from RTK has put an incredible strain on BIRN's smooth production, of the programs leaving programs without any investment, cutting investigative crews, not renovating the stage props etc. The lack of funding from RTK has also made BIRN vulnerable to lawsuits that it can face from parties it investigates, without leaving us enough funds to pay for journalists' legal defence. It should be noted that while RTK has claimed that it cannot pay BIRN programmes due to "lack of funding," it has continued to purchase entertainment programmes and it has three other 24 hour channels. We view the lack of financing for the only investigative programming on RTK as a form of an administrative and financial pressure to limit our ca-

pacities to report independently, thus negatively affecting the freedom of speech.

However, the organisation strongly believes that it is in the public interest to air these programs even though RTK is behind scheduled payment, so we remain committed to serving the public interest through producing and broadcasting these two programs. This has naturally led to strategic endeavours of diversifying the funding base, in order to mitigate these financial challenges.

A lack of institutional transparency among local and central authorities 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 funds. 2015 is noted for a legal victory in the field of institutional transparency and access to public documents. After several years of persisting, BIRN won against the Prime Minister's Office for access to expenditures of the former PM and his deputies. BIRN won this case in both the Basic Court and the Court of appeals, but even though both courts ordered the PM's office to share their expenditures, the PM's office has refused to do so until now. We believe that gradually we are contributing to a more transparent governing culture where access to

public information is guaranteed, rather than 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 offering 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 on cases that are reported in the 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. Progress has been noted during the past few years and now institutions are more responsive to BIRN's complaints.

Acknowledgements

Special Thanks. BIRN Kosovo is pleased to thank the following for contributions in 2015.

Adrijana Hodzic – Administrative Office in North Mitrovica

Advocacy and Training and Resource Center - ATRC

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Aferdita Sylaj - CBM

Agon Çeta – Project Graphics

Agon Makolli - Ricoh

Agon Maliqi –Sbunker

Agron Galani – Head Prosecutor of Basic Prosecution in Peja

Alan Edwards – EULEX

Alban Haliti – INPO

Albana Beçiri - columnist

Albana Kasapi – BBC

Albana Kelmendi - lawyer

Albert Avdiu – Kosovo Judicial Council

Aleksander Lumezi – State Prosecution

Alex Anderson - OSCE

Ali Kutlllovci – Head of Basic Court in Mitrovica

Ali Sadriu - Parliamentary Commission for Supervision of Public Finance

Ali Topalli – spokesperson of Fushe Kosove

Ana Petrusheva – BIRN Macedonia

Andrew Russell - UNDP

Anna Vezyroglou - EU High Representative Mogherini cabinet

Arbana Xharra - Zëri

Arben Fetahu - translator

Arber Beka- Kosovo Police Inspectorate

Arbër Jashari - Official for information in Appeal Court

Arrian Jashari - MDA

Arlinda Arenliu - Technical Assistance Coordinator at White Young Green International Consulting Company

Armend Malazogu - Frutomania

Armend Preiqi - Kosovo Police Inspectorate

Artan Muharremi - Privatization Agency

Artan Qerkini – lawyer at Sejdiu & Qerkini

Artan Venhari - Deputy Auditor General

Arzen Randobrava - US Embassy Press Office

Association of Pulmonologists in Kosovo

Astrit Istrefi - Saferworld

Augustin Palokaj – Journalist at Europe Press Holding

Azem Guri – Ministry of Education

Azra Hasanovic - French Embassy

Baki Kelani – Kosovo Police

Bane Krstic

Bane Nesivic – NGO Aktiv

Bashkim Hyseni – Basic Court Ferizaj

Bashkim Nevzati - lawyer

Bedri Kasumi - local potato producer

Bekim Blakaj – Fund for Humanitarian Right

Bekim Lila - hairdresser

Besa Luci - Kosovo 2.0

Besa Luzha - FES

Besa Shahini - ESI

Besar Likmeta – BIRN Albania

Besim Kelmendi – Special Prosecution

Besnik Bislimi (Vetevendosje) - Head of Parliamentary Commission for Supervision of Public Finance

Besnik Ramosaj- Kosovo Judicial Council	Elisabeth Gowing - activist	Grate e Krushes (Krusha Women)
BIRN Hub	Elmaze Syka – Head of Basic Court in Peja	Group for Legal and Political Studies – GLPS
Blerta Zeqiri – filmmaker	Enver Peci- Kosovo Judicial Council	Hajdar Beqa - Parliamentary Commission for Supervision of Public Finance
Bodo Weber - Democratization Policy Council (DPC)	Fabien Techene – EP Loire	Hajredin Kuci – Justice Minister
Bojana Barlovac - journalist	Fatmir Aliu - journalist	Hajrulla Çeku- NgO “Ec Ma Ndryshe”
Bozidar Vasic	Fatos Bytyci - Reuters journalist	Haki Abazi- RBF
Bridget Millman – BTD	Fejzullah Hasani – Head of Supreme Court	Hamdi Ibrahim – Head of Basic Court in Prishtina
Bruno Neziraj - translator	Ferid Teliqi - translator	Haxhijaha – Local Produce
Budimir Nicic - journalist	Fetah Podvorica - Pro-rector of University of Prishtina	Helen Darbshire - Access Info
Buka - Meridiani	Filloreta Topgjiu - EUSR	Hereze Sefaj - British Embassy
Humollet – Local Produce	Fisnik Minci – journalist at Koha Ditore	Hilmi Jashari – Ombudsperson
Christian Geosits - ADA	Flutura Dedinja - designer	Ian Bancroft - EULEX
Dejan Pavicevic – Belgrade Liaison Office	Flutura Kusari - lawyer	Idro Seferi - journalist
Denis Dizdovic – BIRN	Forum for Civic Initiative – FIQ	Igbal Rugova – Kosovo Women's Network
Dinka Zivalj – spokesperson EU Office	Fred Abrahams – Human Rights Watch	Imer Beka – Basic Prosecution in Prishtina
Djath Rugove – Local Produce	Frutomania – Local Produce	Imer Mushkolaj - journalist
DOKUFEST	Gaby Hagmuller – European Commission	Initiative for Environment and Local Development (IAZHL)
Dominic-Haydn Braithwaite - British Embassy	GAP Institute	Institute for Development Policy – INDEP
Dragana Nikolic Solomon – EULEX	Gerrie Willems – Dutch Ambassador in Kosovo	Internews Kosovo
Dragana Obradovic - BIRN Serbia	Gëzim Kollçaku - lawyer	Istvan Sipos – Deputy Chief of Mission of Hungarian Embassy
Driton Selmanaj - KDI	Gezim Krasniqi - researcher	Ivan Antic
Dukagjin Pupovci - KEC	Gjeraqina Tuhina - journalist	Ivana Howard – NED
Dusan Radakovic- ACDC	Goran Paulsson - Swedish Embassy	Jan Braathu - Norwegian ambassador
Edis Agani – EU Office	Gordana Andric - journalist	Jehona Gjurgjeala – Executive Director of TOKA
Edis Jonuzi	Gordana Igric - journalist	

Jelena Markovic	Majlinda Kelmendi - judo champion	of Global Affairs
Jelena Milic - journalist	Maria Eleni Boura - European External Action Service in Brussels	Norbert Pijls - Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
Jennifer Bachus – Deputy Chief of Mission of American Embassy	Marija Ristic – director of The Unidentified	Nuhi Salihu - journalist/editor of Prizren TV
Jonathan Rattel – Deputy Chief of Special Prosecution	Marko Duric – Director of Serbian Office for Kosovo and Metohija	Patrick Etienne - SDC
Jusuf Thaci – education expert	Markus Baechler - SDC	Pestova – Local Produce
Karl Gianciti - EU DirectorateGeneral for Enlargment	Mary Aguirre - PILPG	Petar Miletic - former MP
Kelsey Guyette – BTD	Mats Staffansson - Swedish ambassador	Petrit Skenderi - Anti-corruption expert UNDP
Konsoni – Local Produce	Matthew Brunwasser - New York Times stringer	Philip Drewry - US Embassy Press Office
Korab Sejdiu - lawyer	Mentor Shala - head of RTK	Philip Mellish - EU Office in Kosovo
Kosovo Customs	Merita Gashi - Ministry of Social Welfare	PILPG
Kosovo Democratic Institute	Michael Dziedzic - author	Pjetër Përgjokaj - lawyer
Kosovo Police	Michelle Schohn - US Embassy Public Affairs Officer	Radica Nusdorfer - EU office in Kosovo
Kosovo Radio Television (RTK)	Miranda Shala - British embassy	Radka Betcheva European Broadcasting Union
Kreshnik Hoxha - columnist	Mirna Buljugic - journalist	Rajmonda Shehu - make-up artist
Kristina Voko - BIRN Albania	Monika Tortschanoff - Austrian Development Agency	Ramadan Zejnullahu – Rector of University of Prishtina
Krystina Marty - Swiss ambassador in Kosovo	Mufail Limani - RTK TV Director	Rasa Nedeljkov - CRTA
Kujtim Hajredini- Art Motion	Murlan Jasiqi - translator	Robert Bosch – Former Dutch Ambassador
Kujtim Shala – Culture Minister	Mursel Raca - Executive Director of the Central Procurement Agency	Rona Nishliu - RTK
Kushtrim Hoti – Green Cinema	Mustafa Skenderi - MREZA	Ruairi O'Connell – British Ambassador
Labinot Iberdemaj – Mega Medium	Nedrete Ismaili- Rilindja	Safet Hoxha - Head of Public Procurement Regulatory Commission
Laura Trimajova – European Parliament	Nehat Mustafa – deputy minister of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	Sakibe Jashari - Swiss embassy
Lawrence Marzouk - journalist	Nenad Radosavljevic	Sami Kurteshi - Ombudsperson
Leila Bicakcic- CIN Bosnia and Herzegovina	Nita Luci - researcher	Samuel Zbogar – EU Special Representative in Kosovo
Leon Malazogu - researcher	Nora Visoka - Cambridge Academy	Sanja Sovrllic - journalist

Sarah Maliqi – Civil Rights
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Sasa Dragojlo - journalist

Saskia Salzmann - Embassy of
Switzerland

Sevdije Morina – Deputy-chief of
State Prosecution

Srdjan Simonovic

Stojan Peljko - spokesperson

Sylë Hoxha – headprosecutor of
Basic Prosecution in Prizren

Sylejman Klllokoqi – Cameraman
of AP

Tanja Maksic - journalist

Teuta Hoxha

Thomas Gnocchi – head of Politic-
Economic Sector and of European
Integration in the EU Office in
Kosovo

Tinka Kurti - spokesperson

Trofta Istogu – Local Produce

TV Puls

Una Hajdari - journalist

UP Rectorate

Valbona Mehmeti - British
Embassy

Valdet Sala - Leviz Albania

Valdete Daka – head of KQZ

Valmir Ismaili - KDI

Vaton Durguti – head of Basic
Court in Gjakova

Veton Mujaj- Syri i Vizionit

Victoria Anderica – Access Info

Viktor Popovic - Swiss Cooperation
Officer

Visar Azemi – KOSID

Visare Gorani - Embassy of
Sweden

Vjosa Osmani - MP

Vlora Çitaku – ambassador in the
US

Voughan Smith - Frontline Club

Vukosava Crnjanski - CRTA

Walter Veirs – Charles Stewart
Mott

Xhemajl Rexha - KOHAVISION

Xheraldina Vula - RTV 21

Yll Zeka – Kosovo Chamber of
Lawyers

Ymer Hoxha – head of Basic Court
in Prizren

Zana Cimili - journalist

Zana Limani – Telecommunication
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Zef Prendrecaj – Disciplinary
Prosecutor

Zyhdi Haziri – Head of Basic Court
in Gjiilan

Fatih Sylka

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Florent Spahija

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PREVIOUS STAFF AND INTERNS

**We would like to thank the
previous staff members and
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the past:**

Adelina Berisha

Anton Nrecaj

Ardian Lulaj

Bashkim Zeqiri

Edona Musa

Ekrem Fazliu

Eronida Mataj

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.

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