



2021

table of contents

04

FOREWORD - JETA XHARRA

07

BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF

09

MISSION & VISION

10

METHODS & APPROACH

11

DIARY OF IMPACTS

14

AWARDS GIVEN & RECEIVED

17

MEDIA PRODUCTION

36

SOCIAL MEDIA PERFORMANCE

37

MONITORING & ADVOCACY

40

TRAINING & MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

45

FUNDING IN 2021

47

CHALLENGES AHEAD

49

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A portrait of a woman with shoulder-length brown hair, wearing a dark blazer over a white ruffled blouse. She has her arms crossed and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a dark, muted green.

foreword

We will remember 2021 most notably as the year in which 2,988 Kosovo citizens died from COVID-19. This is traumatic in itself, as it amounted to roughly a quarter of the people that Kosovo lost during the war.

In addition to loss of life, there was also a considerable loss of time in 2021 that institutions spent electioneering rather than serving and working for the people. Within 12 months, Kosovo citizens went to cast their ballots twice, first in the February parliamentary elections and subsequently in the October municipal elections, and the time in between was mostly spent campaigning.

Importantly, Kosovo voters proved once again that they are not mere cogs in the political machine. Vetëvendosje, the incumbent party that had secured over 50 per cent of the votes in the February elections, was heavily punished by voters in the October municipal elections, winning only four out of 38 municipalities and losing Prizren, the second biggest municipality in Kosovo.

In terms of activism, 2021 will be remembered as the year of citizens' protests in response to the justice system's mishandling of domestic violence and gender-based violence, which led to the death of yet more innocent women at the hands of their husbands.

Our teams of journalists, editors, court monitors, legal officers and researchers followed these developments closely, investigating, asking for accountability from authorities and filing cases to the public institutions that ended up not just being reported but also leading to the arrests and convictions of culprits. Our team of producers, camera operators, audio and lights operators, editors and graphic designers were there to ensure the delivery of quality media that provides truthful, objective and factual information to Kosovo citizens.

In what has become a flagship TV programme, BIRN Kosovo's Debat Përnime empowered the Kosovo voter in the 2021 elections by giving citizens the opportunity to scrutinise the candidates and assembly members running for office in the parliamentary and municipal elections.

A total of 62 electoral debates were produced throughout the year, not just in Kosovo but also in eight municipalities in North Macedonia. Sadly, the outdated mentality of political parties in Kosovo was again exposed as only men were deemed fit to be elected mayor. This is largely because

so few women ran to be mayor in the first place. Only nine out of over 160 mayoral candidates were women.

However, BIRN Kosovo found a way to present women's voices during this election. Women candidates for municipal assemblies were invited to elaborate their plans at a time when male candidates dominated the political shows on other TV channels. Some of these women candidates for municipal assemblies were much better prepared than some of the mayoral candidates that debated.

In 2021, BIRN Kosovo continued to contribute to training the next generation of Kosovo journalists in tackling disinformation and fake news, phenomena that have surged in the Kosovo media landscape.

As part of fighting one-sided narratives, even though we worked with COVID restrictions in 2021, we managed to run six-month Albanian and Serbian language courses for Albanian and Serb journalists interested in learning each other's languages.

In the past we had imposed a monitoring process on the recruitment of key management staff in various public institutions in Kosovo. However, 2021 is the year that institutions started asking us to monitor their recruitment processes in order to ensure that the people who run them get their jobs based on merit, rather than on clan, family or party affiliation.

One example is that following BIRN Kosovo's successful monitoring of the recruitment process to select the Information and Privacy Agency commissioner (that had been delayed for three years), we have been invited to monitor all of this agency's planned recruitment processes in the coming year. After almost five years of monitoring recruitment, the word is out that the

presence of BIRN monitors in vacancy recruitment across different institutions is deterring candidates who think they will get a job because of predetermined political, nepotism or financial networks.

The eight journalism awards that BIRN won this year are also additional proof of how impactful our work is in society. Our team's work received recognition from local and international institutions who awarded BIRN Kosovo's most vibrant journalists for stories on public procurement, corruption and the environment.

To note just a couple, the Association of Journalists awarded two of my colleagues at BIRN Kosovo as "Journalist of the Year 2021" and "Best Cameraman of the Year 2021". We are also glad that, for the second consecutive year, the KALLXO team was recognised as a source of reporting corruption by the U.S. State Department in its 2021 Investment Climate Statement.

I would like to thank all 1,705 citizens who submitted reports via our KALLXO.com anti-corruption platform during 2021. Your reporting on the injustices encountered led to published investigations that had an impact in society.

Namely, what began as injustices reported by citizens became the subjects of investigation by our team of researchers and legal experts, which ultimately led to direct impacts, such as: a judge was suspended from office; two other judges were placed under investigation; a former minister was indicted for corruption; two prosecutors are facing disciplinary proceedings; two health workers were

arrested for corruption; a large criminal usury group in the region of Peja was destroyed; relatives of a prosecutor were charged with corruption; vacancies for the boards of the Post of Kosovo and the "Hidromorava" Regional Water Supply Corporation were cancelled; over €100,000 in fines were issued to businesses that abused the state budget; and over €100,000 in fines were issued to political parties for violating election rules. These are only some of our accomplishments in the year 2021 that would undoubtedly not have occurred if one of you had not made a report on KALLXO.com.

I also thank all 51 members of my team for your hard work and your families for bearing through your absences that have allowed you to go above and beyond to make a real difference in Kosovars' life. Your work has yet again gone beyond mere reporting; it has been proven to make Kosovo a little bit of a fairer place to live.

Thus, I am extremely humbled to be surrounded by such a dedicated group of professionals in the office, where we share and co-produce everything with our sister organisation, Internews Kosova.

And lastly, I thank all the donors, partners and sponsors — both local and international — as well as our supporters, friends and whistleblowers who have our back. We hope to continue to be worthy of your support in many years to come.

Jeta Xharra

Executive director - BIRN Kosovo



board members & staff

BIRN regional board members

ANA PETRUŠEVA

Member of the board, Country director,
North Macedonia

PER BYMAN

Member of the board / Managing director
at NRC Flüchtlingshilfe Deutschland

ROBERT BIERMAN

Member of the board / Chief revenue officer
at News Deeply

STEVE CRAWSHAW

Member of the board / Policy and advocacy
director at Freedom from Torture

TIM JUDAH

Chair of the board / Journalist at The Economist

BIRN Kosovo Assembly of Members

DRAGANA NIKOLIĆ SOLOMON

Member of the board, Country director,
North Macedonia

JEHONA GJURGJEALA

Executive director at TOKA

JETA XHARRA

Founding member

KRESHNIK GASHI

Managing editor, Internews Kosova

VISAR PREBREZA

Managing editor, BIRN Kosovo

BIRN Kosovo staff

Adelina Ahmeti

Assistant editor / Journalist / Project coordinator

Afërdita Fejzullahu

Journalist / Researcher

Albulena Sadiku Ismaili

Deputy executive director / Senior programme manager

Albulena Zeneli Jonuzi

Human resources / Finance officer

Altin Morina

Information technology assistant

Amire Qamili Çollaku

Journalist

Arber Gashi

Marketing head

Ardita Zeqiri

Monitor / Investigative journalist

Arian Hyseni

IT manager / Technical staff coordinator

Arita Suhodolli

Project manager

Arjana Berisha

Junior journalist / Researcher

Arlinda Mehmeti

Monitor / Junior researcher

Arta Sopi

Journalist

Bahrie Sadiku

Monitor / Researcher

Behar Mustafa

Journalist / Researcher

Blendi Shaqiri

Camera operator / Junior video editor

Blerita Begisholli

Editor / Journalist

Diellza Kryeziu

Administrative assistant

Diellza Salihu

Project manager

Donika Elshani

Project coordinator

Dorentina Kastrati

Deputy editor / Journalist / Project coordinator

Drenushe Ramadani

Project coordinator / Journalist / Researcher

Durim Shala

Camera operator / Video editor

Egzon Dahsyla

Journalist / Monitor

Ejup Gojnovci

Editor / Journalist

Elona Sejdullahu

Junior research monitor

Emirjeta Vllahiu

Journalist / Researcher

Eraldin Fazliu

Project coordinator / Editor / Journalist

Erolinda Uka

Monitor / Researcher

Fatirion Ibrahim

Producer

Fitim Limani

Junior monitor / Researcher

Hysen Gara

Stage technician / Office security officer

Ilirjana Hoti

Junior journalist / Researcher

Isa Vatovci

Journalist

Jack Robinson

Editor / Journalist

Jetmir Hoxha

Camera operator / Junior video editor

Jeton Ispahiu

MCR producer / Camera operator / Editor

Kastriot Berisha

Monitor / Researcher / Legal officer

Labint Leposhtica

Coordinator of court monitoring and the Legal Office

Medianë Halili

Journalist / Monitor / Researcher

Mimoza Feraj

Finance officer

Naser Fejza

Camera operator / Video editor

Naser Sertolli

Editor / Journalist

Nuhi Shala

Researcher

Përparim Isufi

Editor-in-chief / Investigative journalist

Ramize Hyseni – Assistant in finance and administration

Rinesa Osmanaj

Junior journalist / researcher

Rona Rushiti Begolli

Project coordinator

Rrahman Ramaj

Procurement officer / Financial analyst

Rron Agolli

Camera operator / Junior video editor

Shkëlqim Xhaqaj

Journalist

Shkodrane Dakaj

Junior journalist / Researcher

Shyhrete Maliqi

Junior monitor / Researcher

Suela Beka

Office maintenance assistant

Tringa Ruka

Monitor / Researcher

Urim Krasniqi

Photo reporter / Editor

Valon Sadiku

Camera operator / Video editor intern

Visar Prebreza

Managing editor

Vyrtite Gërvalla

Monitor / Researcher

Xheneta Muretaz

Journalist / Monitor / Researcher

Yllka Hoxha

Manager of finance / Human resources

Zgjim Sefa

Journalist / Junior researcher

Internews Kosova (I/KS) staff

Antigonë Isufi

Monitor / Investigative journalist

Arbisa Shekriu

Journalist / Monitor

Astrit Perani

Production assistant / Camera operator / Video editor

Blerita Ibrerdemaj

Legal officer / Monitor / Project coordinator

Diellza Luzha

Monitor / Journalist / Researcher

Dorena Shala

Assistant in administration and finance

Doruntina Baliu

Project coordinator / Investigative journalist / Editor

Gentiana Ahmeti

Monitor / Journalist / Researcher

Granit Mavriqi

Social media editor / Graphic designer - 2D/3D

Kreshnik Gashi

Managing editor / Journalist / Moderator

Labërie Leci

Assistant in projects and administration

Luljeta Pacolli Paloja

Administration and finance officer

Lum Ademi

Finance manager

Naim Krasniqi

Journalist / Researcher / Editor

Naser Fejza

Camera operator / Video editor

Shqipron Halimi

Assistant MCR producer / Camera operator / Editor

Taulant Osmani

Deputy editor / Journalist / Project coordinator

Valdet Salihu

Producer

Valon Fana

Journalist



mission & vision

BIRN Kosovo is an independent non-governmental organisation that seeks to provide momentum to the democratic transition in Kosovo by promoting and advocating for accountability, rule of law and policy reform within both public and private institutions in Kosovo.

One of BIRN Kosovo's key goals is maintaining its position as the premier investigative and analytical journalism organisation in Kosovo and continuing to report on the country's most pressing issues in politics, economics and society. In particular, BIRN aims to act as

a watchdog of public institutions, supporting the reforms required to further their path towards meeting EU accession criteria and the standards of the European Union. Through our televised debates, reports and training on critical thinking and argumentation, BIRN Kosovo also encourages debate as a key source of knowledge, emancipation and political culture.

After starting with fewer than five staff members in w2005, BIRN Kosovo has since evolved into a comprehensive media organisation, employing journalists, editors and editorial, administrative and technical staff in order to produce high quality investigative and analytical reporting. BIRN Kosovo now has a team of around 51 full-time professionals as well as numerous local and international contributors that work on the development and implementation of ongoing programmes.

METHODS & APPROACH

BIRN Kosovo uses various research methods, the application of which depends on the deployed mediums, which include articles, investigative reports, televised debates, televised reports and legal analyses.

Its overall approach is shaped by the following concepts:

JOURNALISM THAT ACTS AS A WATCHDOG

All of BIRN Kosovo's outputs have one underlying objective in common: keeping the powerful accountable. Whether this is done through hard-hitting interviews, televised debates, reports or in-depth written investigations — all of which aim to hold leaders accountable and unveil corruption — our philosophy remains the same: to build a culture of media oversight in Kosovo using journalistic methods.

JOURNALISM THROUGH FIELDWORK

BIRN Kosovo's team includes 51 staff members and contributors, ranging from investigative journalists and editors to civil society activists, researchers and professional court monitors who cover every municipality in Kosovo. BIRN Kosovo is the only media outlet in the country that holds systematic municipal and electoral debates, which offer citizens the opportunity to communicate with and question their political representatives.

ENGAGED JOURNALISM

Effective journalism should not only generate reporting but also trigger real change. We believe that it is not enough to report on corruption or vote rigging if competent institutions do not take action. To combat indifference and inaction from local institutions in response to the issues we report on, BIRN has established a Legal Office, which submits cases to prosecution offices, complete with evidence collected through investigative reporters and court monitors.

JOURNALISM THAT TRAINS FOR EXCELLENCE

BIRN Kosovo has become a hub for innovation, creativity and high-quality journalism, cementing our position as a trendsetter in Kosovo's media landscape. BIRN Kosovo provides on-the-job training and workshops on topics including TV production, investigative journalism, fact-checking, media ethics, public speaking, violent extremism and radicalisation, as well as advocacy training on energy and environmental issues. Training beneficiaries include journalists, court monitors, researchers, local media workers, university and high school students, civil society activists and officials from Kosovo's public institutions, to name only a few.

DIARY OF IMPACTS

BIRN Kosovo has always strived to promote freedom of speech, human rights and democratic values in Kosovo and has remained an influential media organisation throughout southern and eastern Europe. Meanwhile, as a result of our diligent work in increasing accountability and transparency in state institutions, BIRN Kosovo remains the second most trusted institution in the country, after Kosovo Police.

Throughout the course of 2021, BIRN Kosovo's media deliverables resulted in more than 100 direct short-term and long-term impacts on wider society. As a result of our monitoring and reporting efforts:

- Indictments were filed against five (5) high profile officials, including individuals convicted of corruption, undue influence and violations of tax regulations;
- More than 10 individuals were arrested, and dozens of indictments featuring organised crime and corruption charges were initiated;
- Disciplinary proceedings were initiated against more than 10 prosecutors, judges and public officials and one (1) judge was suspended;
- Thirty-one (31) inspections against six (6) businesses were undertaken and 20 fines of €5,000 were issued to businesses; and
- €28,700 worth of fines were filed to political parties who violated election rules during the 2021 parliamentary elections.

Below, BIRN Kosovo is proud to present a diary of stories that had wide-reaching impacts over the previous year:

On January 29, 2021,

KALLXO.com investigated and published an in-depth story regarding a potential monopoly in the petroleum market, which could have guaranteed revenues of over €15 million per year for the beneficiary. The reporting highlighted flaws in measures envisioned in a new Administrative Instruction, which could allow a single company a monopoly in providing certification on imported petrol, earning the company millions and raising fuel prices. Following KALLXO.com's reporting, the certification process for the company was suspended and on May 7, 2021, the new minister of trade and industry, Rozeta Hajdari, announced that this process would now be the responsibility of Kosovo Customs.

Of the 14 complaints submitted by BIRN Kosovo and I/KS to the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) on parties' violations of election rules during the February 2021 parliamentary elections, on February 19, 2021, 10 complaints were approved, and €28,700 worth of fines were issued to political parties. Moreover, ECAP approved a total of 132 BIRN Kosovo complaints, and issued a total of €7,250 worth of fines, for irregularities encountered during the mayoral and assembly elections that took place on November 14, 2021.

On March 17, 2021,

after KALLXO.com reported on a photo in which Prosecutor Agron Uka is seen chatting in a resort restaurant with Besnik Berisha, the lawyer of a suspect charged with the murder of a 29-year-old, Chief State Prosecutor Aleksander Lumezi removed Uka from the case on suspicion of improper conduct. Disciplinary proceedings were also initiated against Uka by the chief prosecutor at the Basic Prosecution in Gjilan, Arben Kadriu. The decision came days after the case's prosecutor had reclassified the charge from "aggravated murder" to "accidental murder", sparking a backlash from the family of the victim and the public in Kosovo.

On April 6, 2021,

a laboratory worker at Kosovo's National Institute of Public Health, Betim Selimi, who had been caught by the KALLXO.com team accepting bribes in order to expedite COVID-19 testing, was found guilty by the Basic Court in Pristina.

On April 20, 2021,

another major investigation was conducted after a citizen reported that he had been a victim of usury by paying large sums to a high-profile individual. After reporting via KALLXO.com, our file was sent to the Basic Prosecution in Peja, resulting in the arrest of one member of an organised group of loan sharks.

On May 10, 2021,

KALLXO.com published an investigation into cryptocurrency mining in the northern municipalities of Kosovo, including North Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zubin Potok and Zvečan. The investigation found that attics, basements and garages in these municipalities were being rented out for crypto mining, without a cent being paid for the electricity used. Following the publication of our investigation, Kosovo Customs requested information on the locations at which the cryptocurrencies were being mined, and by the end of 2021 large sums of equipment for the production of cryptocurrencies had been confiscated by Kosovo Police. Additionally, the Ministry of Economy decided to halt the production of cryptocurrencies in Kosovo.

Following BIRN Kosovo's monitoring of the recruitment processes for the head of the Post of Kosovo and its subsequent reporting that the appointment had been illegitimate, not transparent and in violation of the Law on Public Enterprises, on June 6, 2021, the board of the Post of Kosovo ordered the cancellation of the decision to elect Xhevdet Smakiqi.

On July 1, 2021,

the interim board of the Post of Kosovo requested that the management of the company cancel all promotions that had occurred in the past eight months. This came as a result of KALLXO.com's investigation regarding recent promotions. Among those who had been promoted were Shkumbin Krasniqi, *who is both the brother of a Vetëvendosje member of the Malisheva Assembly, Alban Krasniqi, and the brother-in-law of the minister of justice, Albulena Haxhiu.*

On July 7, 2021,

former European Integration Minister Dhurata Hoxha faced charges of abuse of office over a contract signed with a French PR company that had been hired to promote territorial exchanges as a solution to the dispute with Serbia, according to KALLXO.com's investigation. Kosovo's Special Prosecution filed an indictment against Hoxha and four current and former Ministry officials over a contract signed two years earlier that saw budget money spent on a Paris-based PR company that promoted Kosovo's "territorial modification" as a way to solve the Kosovo-Serbia dispute.

On August 27, 2021,

the Basic Prosecution in Pristina announced that it had authorised Kosovo Police to open investigations into the suspicious engagement of forensic experts by the Basic Prosecution in Gjilan. This came as a consequence of KALLXO.com's investigation that revealed that doctors, surgeons and orthopedists in the municipality of Gjilan had been engaged as forensic experts by the Basic Prosecution in Gjilan, despite not having completed a specialisation in forensic medicine.

On October 27, 2021,

KALLXO.com broadcast a TV programme based on its investigation into a verdict handed down by a local court in the town of Peja that had sentenced a man to eight months and eight days in prison for sexually abusing a 15-year-old. Judge Florije Zatriqi was suspended by the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC) after KALLXO.com reported on the case in which the defendant was handed an unduly light sentence for an offense that should be punished by between three and five years in prison. On December 14, 2021, the Supreme Court confirmed the suspension of the judge.

On September 21, 2021,

KALLXO.com published an investigation into the assistant director of the Tax Administration of Kosovo (TAK) in Gjilan who had for years "tolerated" tax violations by her family's business. An out-of-order fiscal cash register, non-issuance of fiscal receipts, a lack of tax books and undeclared workers were only a few of the irregularities discovered at the business of the public official's family. Following the publication of KALLXO.com's investigation, on October 7, 2021, TAK referred the assistant director to the Anti-Corruption Agency.

On December 21, 2021,

a largescale raid took place in Shterpce following suspicions of corruption related to the construction of villas in Brezovica. At the beginning of 2021, KALLXO.com had made contact with someone who had witnessed this suspected corruption, and they had shared the evidence with our team. Afterwards, KALLXO.com shared these evidence materials with the Basic Prosecution in Ferizaj, which was followed by the arrest of 12 individuals, including the former mayor of Shterpce.

AWARDS GIVEN AND RECEIVED

AWARDS GIVEN

In June 2021, BIRN Kosovo granted a consortium consisting of Ikonë Production and Pixels Production a contract for the production of an up-to-60-minute documentary on sustainable development in Kosovo. Throughout 2021, the contractor worked intensively on the production of the documentary with assistance from BIRN Kosovo.

On July 7, 2021,

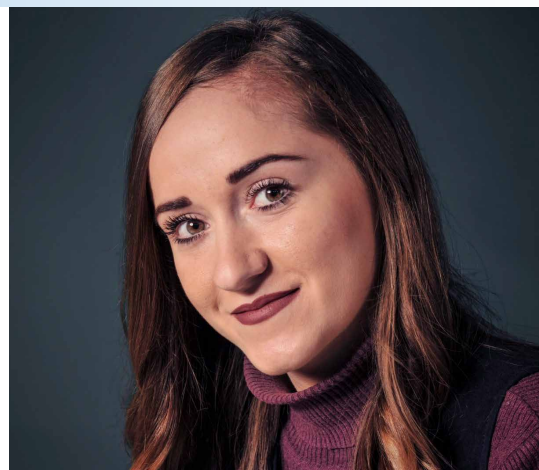
BIRN Kosovo awarded five (5) journalists for the three (3) best stories about the environment, energy efficiency and climate change, as part of the EU-funded “Europeanisation of Kosovo’s Environmental Agenda” project.

AWARDS RECEIVED

BIRN Kosovo’s journalism received a great deal of recognition in 2021, during which 12 of our journalists were awarded eight (8) journalism prizes.

In April 2021,

stories on monitoring public procurement in Kosovo by BIRN Kosovo/KALLXO.com journalists Dorentina Kastrati, Virtyte Gërvalla and Valon Fana were recognised in the top three journalistic stories on public procurement in awards organised by FOL Movement. BIRN Kosovo journalist Kastrati’s story titled “The Suspicious Tender Made for the Minister’s Family Member” was awarded first prize, while Gërvalla and Fana were awarded third prize for their story titled “The Municipality Led by Gazmend Muhaxheri Instigates a Tender for Ramiz Kelmendi’s Family Members”.



“In the past, we did not have access to documents through which we would be able to write comprehensively about procurement. Today, we have the e-procurement platform and open contracts where we can access all procurement-related data. Thirty per cent of Kosovo’s budget is spent through procurement and this should encourage journalists to start focusing more on procurement”.

Dorentina Kastrati

Winner of best article in the “Speak Up on Procurement 2021” awards

On July 15, 2021,

the three best investigative stories in Kosovo published in 2020 were awarded by the European Union Office in Kosovo. BIRN Kosovo's country director Jeta Xharra and managing editor Visar Prebreza received first prize for their story titled "Unclean Energy: A Kosovar Who Owned the Sun". The article was about a Kosovo businessman who stands behind six companies registered in Malta that reap millions of euros from the sale of solar energy, in violation of anti-monopoly rules. Secondly, a story by Kreshnik Gashi and Adelina Ahmeti about illegal gambling in the village of Karaçeva won third prize as a story of exceptional quality.

"For us, it is very important that colleagues whom I highly respect have awarded us this prize. After doing the work behind the award we had many penalties and rewards. The director of the Radio Television of Kosovo told us that he would not broadcast our TV programmes anymore after we reported on Blerim Devolli's story".

Jeta Xharra and Visar Prebreza

Winner of the award for best investigative story



In its [2021 Investment Climate Statement on Kosovo](#), the U.S. State Department listed BIRN and its executive director, Jeta Xharra, as a useful resource for reporting corruption for the second year in a row.

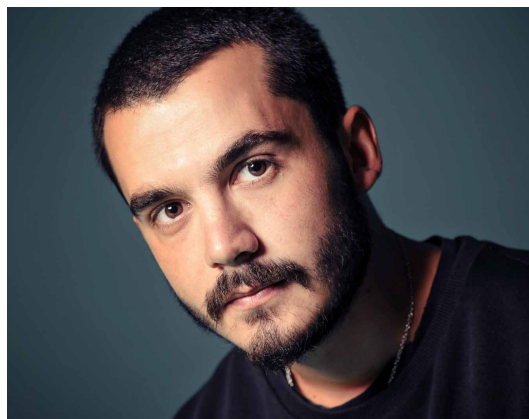
On July 15, 2021,

On December 20, 2021, the ÇOHU NGO awarded three of BIRN Kosovo's journalists with the "Environmental Award" for their stories on the environment. Egzon Dahsyla won first prize for his story "Illegal Burning Continues: The State has Failed to Treat Used Tyres Even Though it is Recyclable Material", which was published on KALLXO.com, while Antigona Isufi and Blerta Begisholli were awarded second prize for the story "Urban Chaos Blamed for the Disappearance of Greenery in Kosovo", which was published in Prishtina Insight.

“For me, this award is additional motivation to continue working on environmental stories. If in the past 10 years we have only talked about asphalt and poor sewage systems, in the next 10 years we should talk primarily about the environment”.

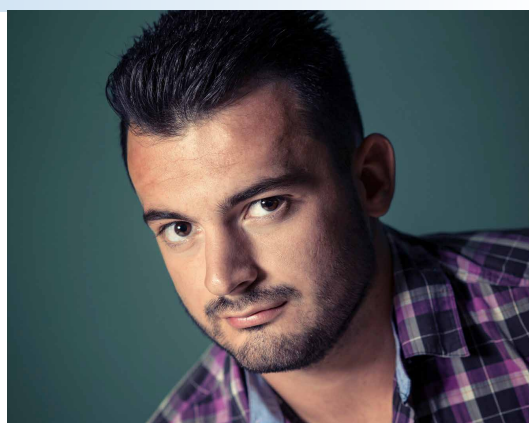
Egzon Dahsyla

Winner of first prize in the Environmental Award



On December 23, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo/KALLXO.com's journalist Kastriot Berisha was named “Journalist of the Year 2021” by the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK). AJK awarded Berisha for his reporting on the justice sector which had a great social reaction and which resulted in the launch of criminal investigations, disciplinary proceedings and the suspension of a judge, a decision that was confirmed by the Supreme Court.



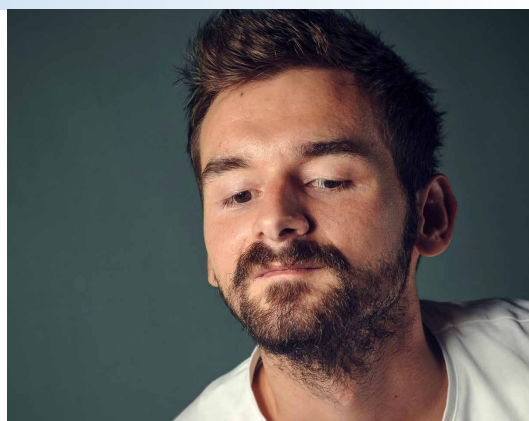
“I hope this award sends a clear message to all public officials, prosecutors and judges that there are journalists, lawyers and organisations out there that are capable of analysing their work, monitoring their every move and willing to publish their unlawful actions”.

Kastriot Berisha

Winner of the “Journalist of the Year 2021” prize

On December 23, 2021,

On December 23, 2021, AJK also named BIRN Kosovo/KALLXO.com's camera operator Deniz Sillovinja “Best Cameraman of the Year 2021” for his work on filming the story “Pilot Since the Age of 17” for which he used three technological devices: a drone, a GoPro and an interview recording camera.



“We cameramen are behind all the important stories you hear and read about in the news. Yet, we rarely ever receive awards for our work. I hope that in the future more cameramen will be awarded for the important work that they do”.

Deniz Sillovinja

Winner of the “Cameraman of the Year 2021” prize



media production

Throughout 2021, BIRN Kosovo investigated, wrote, published and broadcast stories on topics, including: i) continuous reports on the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on Kosovo's economy, and justice and health sectors, as well as its impacts on vulnerable groups such as women, minority communities, LGBTQI+ people, etc.; ii) wrongdoings and malpractices in public procurement related to COVID-19 pandemic services and other public contracts, including inspections of businesses to check if they are respecting COVID-19 measures; iii) the February 2021 parliamentary elections and October 2021 municipal elections; iv) North Macedonia's Albanian-majority municipal elections; v) corruption and irregularities in public institutions, including Kosovo's public service broadcaster and a public transport company; vi) developments regarding

the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and reciprocal measures against Serbia; vii) war crimes and wartime missing persons; viii) Kosovo-Albania tensions over the “Open Balkan” project; ix) the transparency and accountability of the justice sector overall and of that in the north of Kosovo; x) the illegal production of cryptocurrencies; xi) violations of the labour rights of vulnerable groups during the pandemic; and xii) the justice system’s handling of domestic violence cases, to name only a few.

Between January 2021 and December 2021, BIRN Kosovo received 1,705 citizen reports and published 30,325 articles through its online anti-corruption platform KALLXO.com. Of these articles, 295 were in-depth analyses, 137 were investigations, 121 were fact-checking Krypometër articles – of which 60 were fact-checking articles identifying false information spread by media outlets – and 828 were articles yielding from the monitoring of court hearings, while the remaining 28,944 were news pieces, including interviews, opinions, daily news bulletins, etc.

Of the 1,705 reports received from citizens, our team followed up on 997, including submitting letters, recommendations and requests for access to documents.

Furthermore, during 2021, BIRN Kosovo published 250 televised debates and reports as part of its KALLXO Përnime TV programme. Differently from previous years, throughout 2021 BIRN Kosovo broadcast at least four televised productions per week through its media partner, RTV Dukagjini. Many televised productions were also broadcast and published through its Serbian language partner, TV Mreža.

2021 was the “year of elections”. BIRN Kosovo produced a total of 62 electoral debates in the framework of the Debat Përnime TV programme, including debates

ahead of the February 2021 parliamentary elections and the October 2021 municipal elections and debates with mayoral candidates from the eight Albanian-majority municipalities in North Macedonia.

In 2021, BIRN Kosovo produced a documentary titled “Extremism and Radicalism”. The documentary consists of interviews with the head of Kosovo Police’s Counter-terrorism Directorate, imams, prosecutors, family members of returnees, sociologists, psychologists, social workers, officials from correctional services, teachers and civil society experts. In one way or another, all these interviewees have had experience with people who have been subject to the recruitment processes of terrorist groups in conflict countries. The documentary’s goal is to educate society on the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, and on the reintegration and resocialisation process, by offering points of views from different fields.

BIRN Kosovo’s KALLXO.com had great success throughout 2021 in reaching audiences through TV and social media. In 2021, its video and televised productions had 5,400,864 views on YouTube, 4,607,022 reaches on Facebook and 42,129,050 website visits.

KALLXO.com is BIRN Kosovo and I/KS's fastest growing product. It is the first anti-corruption platform in Kosovo for reporting on corruption, fraud and other legal violations within both public and private institutions and companies. In a recent public opinion survey, KALLXO.com was listed as the second most credible source for fighting corruption for the fifth time in a row, behind only the Kosovo Police and far ahead of the State Prosecutor and Anti-Corruption Agency.

Initially, the platform exclusively investigated reports received from citizens, but it soon transformed into a trusted source of information as a news portal. KALLXO.com is made possible by our team of journalists, editors, legal advisers, court monitors and producers, who conduct fieldwork every day and offer objective and fact-checked information.

KALLXO.com is an all-inclusive platform, serving all ethnic communities in Kosovo including Albanians, Serbs, Bosniaks, Turks, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, among others. KALLXO.com also serves as an umbrella to all of our other media platforms, including the KALLXO Pernimë TV programme, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë (Life in Kosovo) online newspaper, Krypometër (Truth-o-meter) fact-checking platform, and the English language online newspaper, Prishtina Insight.

Some of the most impactful articles published on KALLXO.com in 2021 are outlined below:

On January 15, 2021,

the KALLXO.com team published an investigation revealing how the Municipality of Gjakova had paid out more than was due on a contract for road maintenance, violating the Law on Public Procurement in the process. The contract, which was intended to cost no more than €47,000, eventually racked up a cost of €67,000.

On January 29, 2021,

the KALLXO.com team published an in-depth story regarding a potential monopoly in the petroleum market, which could have guaranteed revenues of over €15 million per year for the beneficiary. The reporting highlighted flaws in measures envisioned in a new Administrative Instruction, which could allow a single company a monopoly in providing the certification for imported petrol, earning the company millions and raising fuel prices.

On February 20, 2021,

KALLXO.com discovered that the Municipality of Gjakova had awarded a contract worth €80,615 for the supply of 82 computers and 88 laptops to a business owned by a family member of a municipal official.

On February 24, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo's KALLXO.com team reported on suspicions of an illegally run casino in the Mitrovica region. Following our reporting on the case, Kosovo Police intervened and closed the casino down.

In another story that KALLXO.com has been pursuing for years, on March 24, 2021, the Basic Prosecution in Ferizaj opened a further investigation into the employer of Mentor Ramadani, who was injured at work five years ago. This latest case was related to the falsification of employment contracts.

On April 16, 2021,

KALLXO.com reported that three family members of former President Hashim Thaçi's brother, Gani Thaçi, along with his wife and brother-in-law, were employed at the Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK).

On May 9, 2021,

KALLXO.com reported that a former candidate for MP from the governing Vetëvendosje party, Shkurte Aliu, had been appointed as a member of the board at the National Theatre of Kosovo. Following KALLXO.com's reporting, the Minister for Culture, Youth and Sports, Hajrulla Çeku, reacted to the case, stating that the newly appointed member is qualified to be part of this board and that her career in theatre and production makes her a legitimate candidate for this position.

Following a citizen report on the KALLXO.com platform — in which an individual testified that he had been asked for a €100 bribe in order to have a medical examination as a Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) veteran — and KALLXO.com's subsequent investigation and publication of the case, on July 15, 2021, the doctor who asked for money was arrested.

On July 27, 2021,

KALLXO.com published an investigation regarding the engagement of forensic experts without professional qualifications. More specifically, KALLXO revealed that doctors, surgeons and orthopedists in the municipality of Gjilan had been engaged by the Basic Prosecution in Gjilan as forensic experts illegally since they had not completed the specialisation in forensic medicine.

On December 14, 2021,

KALLXO.com published an article about the KJC decision to suspend Judge Florije Zatriqi, thereby rejecting the latter's appeal, which was considered irrelevant. The Supreme Court confirmed the suspension of the former Peja court judge after KALLXO.com reported that she had sentenced a man to only eight months and eight days in prison for raping a 15-year-old in 2012.

#KALLXOPËRNIME

Formerly known as the Jeta në Kosovë (Life in Kosovo) TV debates and Drejtësia në Kosovë (Justice in Kosovo) TV reports, since September 2020 these two TV platforms have been merged into one, namely the KALLXO Përnime TV programme. KALLXO Përnime covers political, economic and social affairs, as well as justice, police and security issues in Kosovo. KALLXO Përnime provides live debates with state officials, scholars, academics, activists, artists and students, among others. The KALLXO Përnime TV reports regularly feature operations undertaken alongside the Kosovo Police and prosecutions. Alongside its hard-hitting debates and reports, KALLXO Përnime also aims to tackle issues that are considered taboo in Kosovar society. The TV debates and reports produced in the scope of KALLXO Përnime are moderated by BIRN Kosovo's executive director Jeta Xharra and BIRN Kosovo's managing editor Kreshnik Gashi.

Differently from previous years, throughout 2021 BIRN Kosovo broadcast at least four televised productions per week through its media partner, RTV Dukagjini. Many televised productions were also broadcast and published through its Serbian language partner, TV Mreža.

During 2021, BIRN Kosovo published a total of 250 televised debates and reports on KALLXO Përnime. Some of the most impactful KALLXO Përnime stories that sparked public debate are listed below:

On February 15, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast a KALLXO Përnime TV programme that unravelled the mystery of the murder in Peja of Isa Karagjyzi, who was killed in the early morning of December 31, 2014. The TV programme featured stories that uncovered corrupt affairs and evidence tampering.

On March 24, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast a KALLXO Përnime TV programme based on whistleblower reports that exposed structural thefts of natural resources taking place at the mine of the Trepça public enterprise. Within 24 hours of broadcasting, Kosovo Police began collecting the required evidence to investigate suspicions raised in the investigation.

On March 25, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast a KALLXO Përnime TV report about the Post of Kosovo revealing two violations: the illegal election of the head of the Post of Kosovo and irregularities in the election of committees and their payments. BIRN Kosovo had monitored the recruitment processes for the head of the Post of Kosovo and four other senior positions. It reported that the appointment of the head was illegitimate, not transparent and in violation of the Law on Public Enterprises. BIRN Kosovo notified the Post of Kosovo's board and the Ministry of Economy, and the minister of economy subsequently asked the organisation's board to cancel the appointment decision.

On April 14, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast a KALLXO Përnime TV report that revealed abuses in the local public enterprise “Trafiku Urban” (Urban Traffic). These included: the purchase of a car for the needs of the chief executive officer, Lulzim Rexhapaj; the engagement, initially as an intern, of the wife of the former chair of the board, Ruhan Beha, and subsequent pressure for her employment with a regular contract; recruitment outside of legal procedures during 2018 and 2019; and the illegal election of a new board of directors without a preceding competition. Notably, following the broadcasting of this story, on April 24, 2021 the head of the enterprise, Rexhapaj, was dismissed.

On April 20, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast a KALLXO Përnime TV investigation that started with a report by a citizen on KALLXO.com and revealed how a businessman had been asked for over €60,000 from a usury scheme. After the interview, KALLXO.com reported the case to the Basic Prosecution in Peja. Under the direction of Prosecutor Ersan Qavolli, the case was investigated for more than a week and the suspect was subsequently arrested. During the attempted arrest, the suspect tried to attack the police and managed to escape. The suspect eventually turned himself in and was charged with two criminal offenses, usury and assault on an official person.

On May 10, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast a KALLXO Përnime TV investigation related to the illegal production of cryptocurrency in the northern municipalities of Kosovo, including North Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zubin Potok and Zvečan. The investigation found that attics, basements, garages and even entire houses in northern Kosovo municipalities were being rented out for crypto mining, a lucrative business given that citizens in these municipalities do not pay for electricity costs. Following the publication of our investigation, Kosovo Customs requested information on the locations in which the cryptocurrencies were being mined. At the end of 2021, the Ministry of Economy decided to stop the production of cryptocurrencies in Kosovo.

On October 27, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast a KALLXO Përnime TV programme on its investigation into a verdict handed down by a local court in Peja that had sentenced a man to eight months and eight days in prison for sexually abusing a 15-year-old. Judge Florije Zatriqi was suspended by KJC after KALLXO.com reported that the defendant had received an unduly light sentence for an offense that should have been punished by between three and five years in prison. Moreover, after the report by KALLXO.com, disciplinary proceedings were initiated against the case’s prosecutor, who had not filed an appeal against the sentencing decision. On December 14, 2021, the Supreme Court upheld KJC’s decision to suspend Zatriqi, thereby rejecting the judge’s appeal.

On December 23, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast a KALLXO Përnime TV investigation revealing the companies that had won tenders in the municipalities of North Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zubin Potok and Zvečan and relevant related cash flows. The research revealed the contractual links between the “Rad” company, owned by a person who is on a U.S. black list, Radule Stević, and some companies owned by Albanians who worked as subcontractors of “Rad”.

#DEBATPËRNIME



BIRN Kosovo's Debat Përnlme TV programme features electoral debates with parliamentary and municipal candidates running for office, run-off debates and interviews with elected officials. The purposes of Debat Përnlme are four-fold. Firstly, it aims to put public pressure on political parties to offer realistic plans and political programmes that address real problems faced by Kosovo citizens. Secondly, it aims to raise demand among voters to drive the agenda of political party platforms by including citizens' questions throughout the entire campaign. Thirdly, it encourages the inclusion of marginalised groups, particularly women, youth and people from minority communities. And lastly, it aims to increase public demand for the transparency and accountability of public institutions.

2021 was the "year of elections". BIRN Kosovo produced a total of 62 electoral debates, broken down into the following: 14 debates ahead of the February 2021 parliamentary elections, 26 election debates for the municipal elections in October 2021, 14 debates during the second round of municipal elections in 18 municipalities and eight (8) electoral debates with mayoral candidates for eight Albanian-majority municipalities in North Macedonia. BIRN Kosovo invited 127 mayoral candidates and 154 assembly candidates from 31 municipalities to take part. Out of these guests, 161 were women, seven (7) of whom were mayoral candidates. In total, ever since their broadcasting, these debates have reached a viewership of 1,748,619. Moreover, BIRN and I/KS also produced and published 245 articles and quick facts and 12 short videos about the debates and the mayoral candidates' performance in them on its KALLXO.com platform.

The eight (8) electoral debates and additional coverage in North Macedonia included mayoral candidates from the municipalities of Saraj, Gostivar, Çair, Likovë, Dibra, Tearcë, Zhelinë and Tetova. The debates were broadcast during prime time on the Albanian language channel of North Macedonia's public broadcaster, TVMK 2, as well as on the privately owned VOX TV. In addition, they were streamed online through the KALLXO.com platform. The debates enjoyed significant viewership amongst the Albanian community in North Macedonia, with 296,000 views overall.

In the second part of November 2021, BIRN Kosovo broadcast six (6) debates with newly elected mayors in nine (9) Kosovo municipalities.

On November 15, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast a debate with Mayor of Ferizaj Agim Aliu, Mayor of Lipjan Imri Ahmeti, Mayor of Suhareka Bali Muharremaj and Mayor of Podujeva Shpejtim Bulliqi.

On November 16, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast an interview with Përparim Rama, the newly elected mayor of Pristina from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK).

On November 17, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast an interview with Alban Hyseni, the newly elected mayor of Gjilan from Vetëvendosje.

On November 18, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast an interview with Bedri Hamza, the newly elected mayor of South Mitrovica from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK).

On November 29, 2021,

BIRN Kosovo broadcast an interview with Fadil Nura, the newly elected mayor of Skenderaj from PDK.





The election debates broadcast within the framework of Debat Përnime enjoyed a significant viewership, with each debate reaching an average of over 250,000 views on YouTube. The 10 most watched Debat Përnime TV programmes in 2021 are listed below:

Albin Kurti and his team

On February 4, 2021, ahead of the February 14 parliamentary election, Albin Kurti participated in Debat Përnime, together with members of his team from Vetëvendosje and Guxo! — Glauk Konjufca, Arben Vitia, Hekuran Murati, Albulena Haxhiu, Arbërie Nagavci, Fitore Pacolli, Jeta Statovci, Mimoza Kusari and Rozeta Hajdari. Among other things, Kurti and his team were asked to elaborate on what Vetëvendosje was offering in the upcoming election, their plans to fight corruption and whether or not Kurti himself would be the next prime minister. The debate reached a record number of 1,068,681 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

Mayoral and assembly member candidates for the Municipality of Pristina

On October 13, 2021, ahead of the October 17 local elections, Debat Përnime hosted the mayoral candidates for the Municipality of Pristina, along with assembly member candidates, to unveil their programmes and plans for the capital city for the next four years. The debate reached a total of 281,738 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

Run-off debate with mayoral candidates for the Municipality of Pristina

On November 11, 2021, Debat Përnime hosted a debate with the Pristina mayoral candidates who had made it through to the run-off round following the October 17 local election: Vetëvendosje's Arben Vitia, who had secured 42.5 per cent of the vote in the first round, and LDK's Përparim Rama, who had secured 29.2 per cent. The debate reached a total of 253,329 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

Debate on foreign policy after February 14

On February 11, 2021, Debat Përnime hosted a debate on foreign policy, integration and the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue after the February 14 parliamentary elections. The guests were Haki Abazi from Vetëvendosje, Valon Murtezaj from LDK and Emilja Rexhepi from the New Democratic Party (NDS). The debate reached a total of 155,567 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

Debate on rule of law and the fight against corruption

On February 3, 2021, Debat Përnime hosted a debate with representatives from LDK, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) and Vetëvendosje about their parties' policies on the fight against corruption ahead of the February 14 parliamentary elections. The debate reached a total of 143,900 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

Debate on education

On February 6, 2021, Debat Përnime hosted a debate with representatives from LDK, NDS, Vetëvendosje/Guxo! and the Liberal Egyptian Party (PLE), as well as the former deputy minister of education from the Vakrat coalition, to discuss their parties' policies on education ahead of the February 14 parliamentary elections. The debate reached a total of 137,221 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

Debate on energy, agriculture and environment

On February 5, 2021, Debat Përnime hosted a debate with representatives from AAK, LDK and Vetëvendosje to discuss their parties' policies on energy, agriculture and the environment. The debate reached a total of 137,371 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

Debate on health and social welfare

On February 7, 2021, Debat Përnime hosted a debate with representatives from AAK, FJALA and LDK to discuss their parties' policies on health and social welfare. The debate reached a total of 132,082 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

Debate on economic development

On February 8, 2021, Debat Përnime hosted a debate with representatives from AAK, LDK and the New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (IRDK) to discuss their parties' commitments on economic development. The debate reached a total of 126,613 viewers on Facebook and YouTube.

#KRYPTOMETËR (Truth-o-meter)



Launched in 2016, Krypometër is the first fact-checking tool in Kosovo to assess the truthfulness of statements made by public figures. The site fact-checks recent declarations by political party members and public officials, comparing their statements and promises with actual legislation or policies they have implemented through a system that not only labels statements as pass or fail but also evaluates statements as to whether they are true, partially true, a lie, or even a change of position, followed by an explanation for each rating. The tool utilises the power of the internet to promote improved standards of democratic political culture by enabling ordinary citizens to learn more about the performance of their politicians and elected officials. On January 14, 2019 the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) granted Krypometër an extended license to operate after a careful assessment of its work.

A total of 121 Krypometër articles were published with illustrations and infographics in 2021. Some of the main articles are listed below:

January 14, 2021:

[Albin Kurti changes his position on the post of the president](#)

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on PM Kurti's change of stance on the post of the president. He had initially declared that the president should not be a person from election campaigns. Yet, President Vjosa Osmani had been part of election races and campaigns since 2010 and was expected to be part of the election race ahead of the February 14, 2021 general election.

January 9, 2021:

[Media lies about the termination of a contract between the Presidency and William Walker](#)

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on reports by some media outlets that the Presidency's contract with the foundation of the former head of the OSCE Verification Mission in Kosovo, William Walker, had been severed by the then acting president, Vjosa Osmani. KALLXO.com found that the contract had not been terminated but was about to expire in January, according to the deadlines provided in this contract itself.

February 15, 2021:

[Who is lying? Various LDK statements about 'Lake Trump'](#)

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on contradictory statements made by LDK politicians Avdullah Hoti and Valon Murteza about the idea of naming Lake Ujman "Lake Trump". While the former had publicly stated that this was an issue that had been discussed, LDK MP candidate Valon Murtezaj said that this had never been an option.

March 1, 2021:

[The Hoti government's big lie about the coronavirus vaccine](#)

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on a promise by then Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti and then Minister of Health Armend Zemaj that the first vaccines against coronavirus

would arrive and be administered in February. This was a firm lie, as none of the vaccines ordered by Kosovo's institutions came in February.

April 24, 2021:

Sali Bashota lied about the employment of his son-in-law at RTK

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on a declaration made by the chair of RTK's board, Sali Bashota, who had said that since he had become chair of the board, his son-in-law had no longer worked at the public broadcaster. KALLXO.com found this to be untrue, as dates show that even after Bashota became chair of the board, between September and December 2020 both his son-in-law and Bashota himself worked at RTK.

July 19, 2021:

Albin Kurti's lie: He did not establish reciprocity with Serbia as promised

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on PM Kurti's promise to establish reciprocity with Serbia within weeks of getting elected into power. Three months and 27 days after he became PM, the Government of Kosovo had not taken a decision to impose reciprocal measures on Serbia.

October 28, 2021:

Media outlet lies that Prime Minister Albin Kurti has not been threatened

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on a statement made by local media outlet IndeksOnline that PM Kurti had not been threatened. This news was found to be untrue, since the spokesperson of the Government of Kosovo, Përparim Kryeziu, and Kosovo Police had confirmed that PM Kurti had been threatened.

October 17, 2021:

Media outlets lie about the grenade attack at the border crossing in Jarinje

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on a statement made by local media outlets KosovaPress and Reporter.net that police and customs officers in Jarinje had been attacked with grenades. KALLXO.com found this news to be inaccurate, given that police and customs booths had been attacked with a bullet that was suspected to have been fired from a sniper rifle.

November 5, 2021:

Inaccurate reporting on Montenegro's participation in 'Open Balkan'

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on a statement made by some local media that Montenegro would join the "Open Balkan" initiative. KALLXO.com found this news to be inaccurate, given that the Montenegrin prime minister, Zdravko Krivokapić, had announced he had only been a guest at the dinner convened in Serbia to mark the establishment of the regional initiative.

December 15, 2021:

False news about the spread of the virus through aeroplanes

KALLXO.com published a fact-checking article on a statement made by some local online media in Kosovo claiming that Poland, Sweden and Norway are "suing" the World Health Organization (WHO) for "infecting Europe" with "chemical pneumonia" released by planes. The news was denied by Reuters.

Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë is BIRN Kosovo's online Albanian language newspaper, which was established in 2011. It aims to provide objective information of high journalistic standards. The newspaper has been awarded for its contribution to revealing irregularities and the misuse of public money in Kosovo.

In 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published a total of 432 articles, including in-depth analyses and investigations. Some of the topics covered include public spending, the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, the justice system's handling of corruption cases, domestic violence, the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, environmental issues, and arts and culture.

Some of the key articles published on Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë in 2021 are listed below:

Corruption — a keyword in the U.S. State Department's reports on Kosovo

On April 1, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an article on Kosovo's ranking in the U.S. State Department's 2020 Report on Human Rights. Corruption and its impunity amongst Kosovo institutions remains a headline in these reports. In addition to endemic corruption in decision-making institutions, the reports cite other significant problems in the country, such as threats and violence against journalists, attacks on minorities and political interference in the judiciary.

A Vetëvendosje affiliate is elected head of the Kosovo Energy Corporation

On October 4, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an article on the election of the former head of Vetëvendosje's Energy Committee, Nagip Krasniqi, as the chief executive officer of the Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK). Krasniqi was selected by KEK's interim board, which was appointed by the Kurti government without a public competition and which was due to remain in place until the election of a board with a full mandate took place.

Those who failed to protect women continue to work in the justice system

On August 24, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an analysis on negligence within the justice system when it comes to investigating and prosecuting the murders of women killed by their husbands.

The criminal investigation behind a judge's decision to issue an eight-month sentence to a man for raping a minor

On October 29, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an analysis on the verdict handed down by a local court in Peja which had sentenced a man to eight months and eight days in prison for sexually abusing a 15-year-old.

The dark side of the Prishtina Enterprise construction project

On November 4, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an investigation into the suspicious €120 million project of the Municipality of Pristina's Public Housing Enterprise. After exposing violations committed in this project and the suspension of the work by the Ministry of Environment, the board of the Public Housing Enterprise decided to dismiss the enterprise's director, Hajdar Hoxha.

Budget extortion scheme in road maintenance contract

On January 15, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an investigation into a road maintenance contract signed by the Municipality of Gjakova in which a scheme was applied that enabled the extortion of the municipal budget.

'Behind the scenes' of the election of the Pristina Regional Water Company's chief executive

On November 29, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an article on the process behind the election of the chief executive of the Pristina Regional Water Company.

Extortion and deception by 'popular' doctors

On April 15, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an investigation into the practice of 'popular' medicine in Kosovo by self-proclaimed 'popular' doctors, two of whom are accused by the prosecution of committing fraud.

Failure of universities to comply with anti-COVID measures

On January 31, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an article on the failure of universities to comply with anti-COVID measures, including non-compliance with mask and distance mandates, a lack of thermometers for measuring temperatures and non-compliance with other recommendations issued by the National Institute of Public Health.

The murder of an 18-year-old – everything that's known about the case and the history of the suspects

On August 29, 2021, Gazeta Jeta në Kosovë published an article with details of the tragic murder of 18-year-old Marigona Osmani from Ferizaj, including the background of the two suspects involved in the case.

PI was established in 2008 and is BIRN Kosovo's online English language newspaper. Its aim is to inform the wider public on ongoing developments in Kosovo politics, economics, and cultural and social life.

In 2021, PI provided extensive coverage of political affairs, socio-economic developments, and environmental and energy issues in Kosovo, and it also covered numerous topics in the fields of education, culture and institutional reform.

PI's top 10 most read stories in 2021 were as follows:

Stop using the Balkans as a synonym for chaos

On January 8, 2021, following the storming of the U.S. Capitol building in Washington DC by mobs on January 6, 2021, PI published an analysis of clichés about Kosovo and the Balkans that many commentators had used to describe the unfolding situation. The article explores stereotypes of “the Balkans” as a synonym for instability and savagery that are repeatedly invoked in political discourse and popular culture as a zone of depravity from which the “civilised world” must recoil. These stereotypes, the article argues, are inaccurate, unfair and fundamentally colonial.

Kosovo film wins three awards at Sundance Film Festival

On February 3, 2021, PI published a story on “Hive”, the debut feature film by Kosovo filmmaker Blerta Basholli that broke records at the Sundance Film Festival by winning three of the five available awards in the leading independent film festival's World Cinema Dramatic category. “Hive” is based on the life of Fahrije Hoti, a Kosovo Albanian woman whose husband went missing following a massacre by Serbian forces in the village of Krushe e Madhe on March 25, 1999.

Istanbul's Albanian diaspora reconnects with its roots

On April 24, 2021, PI published a lengthy article on Turkey's huge ethnic Albanian community, which is increasingly melting into the mainstream and losing its identity — but some are resisting the trend. For decades, Albanians in Turkey were compelled in public to sublimate their identity into a homogeneous Turkishness. But over the past 20 years, there has been an increase in the embracing and celebration of Albanian heritage in Turkey, as well as concerted efforts to reconnect with the culture, language and lands that their migrant forebearers left behind 50 to 110 years ago.

Nora Gjakova wins Kosovo's third Olympic gold medal

On July 26, 2021, PI published a story on Peja judoka Nora Gjakova, who became the third judoka from Kosovo to win an Olympic medal as she picked up gold in the women's under-57 kg judo competition in Tokyo. On her way to the final, Gjakova defeated Sanne Verhagen of the Netherlands in the round of 16 and Slovenian Kaja Kajzer in the quarter-final, before meeting the Japanese number two seed and former world champion Tsukasa Yoshida in the semi-final.

Film about Italy's ancient Albanian community reaches Netflix

On December 23, 2021, PI published an article on the first ever Albanian-themed film to be shown on Netflix. The film focuses on the traditions and culture of the centuries-old Albanian-descended Arbëresh community in southern Italy. Director and screenwriter Francesca Olivieri told PI that the story of the main character was inspired by her own family. The film tells the story of Aida Greco, a young Arbëresh girl who is grappling with her social and cultural identity. She has long since left her roots in Calabria to become a fashion designer in a big city, but returns home following a death.

In Kosovo, atheists have to hide their convictions

On October 29, 2021, PI published a lengthy article on the position of atheists in Kosovo, exploring atheism as a taboo concept that is generally ignored or viewed negatively in Muslim-dominated societies like Kosovo. The article features interviews with self-proclaimed atheists, who share their experiences of living in a Muslim-dominated society, including the difficulty of opening up to family members and friends about being atheist.

Cultural heritage in Kosovo: Why do international organisations fail to adhere to their own policies?

On April 19, 2021, PI published an article on cultural heritage in Kosovo, highlighting the one-sided approach to the preservation of cultural heritage in Kosovo by international organisations. The article contrasts UNESCO's call to embrace "diversity by accepting and listening to all stakeholders and their experience of, and relationship to, the past", with the current one-sided approach of international organisations in Kosovo. This approach is characterised by negligence of the fact that Kosovo has been bound up in different cultural traditions and religious diversity throughout its history.

In north Kosovo, mining for Bitcoin on 'free' electricity

On May 12, 2021, PI published an article on the lucrative business of Bitcoin mining in the north of Kosovo. For 22 years, people in the north of Kosovo have paid nothing for electricity, the vital component of crypto mining. The practice of crypto mining has become so widespread that even remote villages, in addition to urban centers, have become hubs for the production of Bitcoin. The authorities appear to be turning a blind eye, despite the estimated cost of some €40 million to state coffers over the past three years.

The end of an inglorious era

On February 15, 2021, PI published an article on a new era of Kosovo politics following the outcome of the February parliamentary elections. The Kosovo electorate turned its back on the country's two traditional parties of government, PDK and LDK, and placed its faith in Vetëvendosje and a coalition between Albin Kurti and Vjosa Osmani. The article argues that this coalition represents a constituency that crosses a wide political spectrum and is more wedded to the notion of change than any one unifying ideology after years of nepotism and corruption.

Attack on journalist Visar Duriqi condemned

On February 25, 2021, PI published an article on international and Kosovo media associations' condemnation of the attack on Kosovo investigative journalist Visar Duriqi, who was brutally beaten near his house in Fushë Kosova on February 24, 2021. Duriqi has authored several episodes on crime and corruption on INDOKS which is said to be the reason behind the assault. AJK and the European Center for Press and Media Freedom were among the institutions to condemn the attack.



Balkan Insight and Balkan Transitional Justice

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

Balkan Insight provides daily news, analytical insight and investigations on key issues in 10 countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, with occasional coverage of Greece and Turkey. From 2019, Balkan Insight extended its coverage on Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland. Correspondents address issues including transitional justice, media freedoms, foreign influence, radicalisation, corruption and the rule of law, as well as political crises in the region and beyond. Balkan Insight annually publishes articles from more than 200 local journalists, mostly relying on their wide network of alumni who have participated in award-winning programmes such as the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence, the Balkan Transitional Justice Initiative and the BIRN Summer School of Investigative Journalism.

The Balkan Transitional Justice programme is a regional platform that aims to improve the general public's understanding of transitional justice issues in former Yugoslav countries. The programme is supported by the European Commission, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Robert Bosch Stiftung. The Balkan Transitional Justice programme consists of online news reports published on the Balkan Transitional Justice website, covering local issues related to war crimes. Reports are available in four languages: English, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian/Montenegrin, Albanian and Macedonian.

KALLXO.com's team of journalists have written and published articles on Balkan Insight and Balkan Transitional Justice, covering political, socio-economic and cultural topics at a local and regional level. Below is a selection of articles written by KALLXO.com journalists and published on Balkan Insight and Balkan Transitional Justice during 2021:

Kosovo indicts ex-intelligence chief over deportation of 'Gulenists'

On February 25, 2021, KALLXO.com assistant editor and journalist Adelina Ahmeti and KALLXO.com journalist Arta Sopi published an article on Balkan Insight regarding the indictment of three people over the extradition of six Turkish citizens in March 2018. The indictment included the former chief of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency, Driton Gashi.

Powerful Serb returns to Kosovo after arrest warrant revoked

On March 12, 2021, KALLXO.com journalist Valon Fana and Balkan Insight editor Përparim Isufi published an article on Balkan Transitional Justice about the return to Kosovo of Milan Radoičić. The powerful Kosovo Serb businessman and politician returned after a court revoked an arrest warrant for his alleged involvement in the assassination of rival politician Oliver Ivanović.

Politics still sways public sector hiring in Kosovo

On April 5, 2021, KALLXO.com journalist Valon Fana and Balkan Insight Kosovo correspondent Xhorxhina Bami published an article on Balkan Insight regarding violations in the hiring of senior directors in public enterprises, including the issue of politically affiliated appointees.

In Kosovo, system 'failing to protect' domestic abuse victims

On April 6, 2021, KALLXO.com assistant editor and journalist Adelina Ahmeti published an article on Balkan Insight regarding the Kosovo Police's mishandling of domestic violence cases and their failure to protect victims of domestic violence.

In north of Kosovo, mining for Bitcoin on 'free' electricity

On May 12, 2021, KALLXO.com assistant editor and journalist Adelina Ahmeti and BIRN Kosovo managing editor Kreshnik Gashi published an article on Balkan Insight on crypto mining in the north of Kosovo. It explained how attics, basements, garages and even whole houses are being rented out for crypto mining, a lucrative business when electricity is 'free'.

Kosovo reburies three recently found war victims

On June 25, 2021, KALLXO.com journalist Arbisa Shefkiu published an article on Balkan Transitional Justice on the reburying of the remains of three victims of the Kosovo War at a graveyard in the northern city of Mitrovica.

Christian NGO's child sponsorship programme angers Kosovo parents

On October 13, 2021, KALLXO.com journalist Valon Fana published an article on Balkan Insight regarding World Vision's programme for sponsoring children in Kosovo and claims that the organisation was involved in religious indoctrination and the abuse of confidential data.

Freight carriers protest fees at Kosovo-North Macedonia border

On October 29, 2021, KALLXO.com journalist Xheneta Murtezaj published an article on Balkan Insight on a recent toll imposed on truck drivers entering Kosovo via a border with North Macedonia, after a court ruled that the road sits on private property.

Kosovo Special Prosecution: 'Wartime rape victims must speak out'

On July 8, 2021, BIRN Kosovo managing editor Kreshnik Gashi and Balkan Insight Kosovo correspondent Xhorxhina Bami published an interview with Special Prosecutor Drita Hajdari on Balkan Transitional Justice. Special Prosecutor Hajdari told BIRN that if survivors of sexual violence during the 1998-99 war agree to come forward and testify, she will deal with their cases herself.

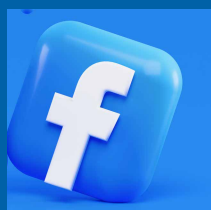
Experts' exodus from Kosovo accreditation body sparks blame game

On August 2, 2021, KALLXO.com journalist Arbisa Shefkiu published an article on Balkan Insight about the resignation of three international members from Kosovo's state body for accrediting educational institutions over their obligation to declare their assets to the Anti-Corruption Agency, as required by Kosovo law.

social media performance



Video and televised productions published on KALLXO.com



Reach:
4,607,022
Engagements:
63,301,238
Number of followers:
407,099

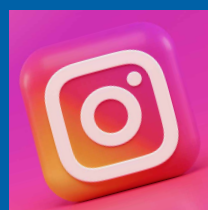
There was an increase in number of followers compared to 2020:



Views:
5,400,864
Watched time (hours):
617,749
Subscribers:
28,900
Impressions:
63,416,457



Impressions:
49,000
Number of followers:
3,420



Number of followers:
30,600



monitoring and advocacy

In 2021, BIRN Kosovo's team of court monitors, legal officers and advisors monitored a total of 388 court hearings and submitted 2,099 legal complaints to relevant public institutions in Kosovo, of which around 970 were requests for access to official documents and requests for access to information.

As a result of its monitoring and the violations found, disciplinary proceedings were initiated against five (5) prosecutors and one (1) judge.

BIRN Kosovo was active in contributing to legislative changes by participating in working groups, panels, conferences, workshops and group meetings in order to provide feedback and recommendations on legislative processes. Our Legal Office also gained and provided expertise by participating in more than 45 public discussions, workshops, conferences and meetings.

BIRN Kosovo monitored 14 recruitment processes for senior positions in Kosovo's public institutions. For instance, BIRN Kosovo reported on a suspicious contract signed by the Municipality of Ferizaj for the employment of 53 people which was cancelled after BIRN's reporting. BIRN Kosovo also reported similar violations encountered in recruitment processes in the Municipality of Rahovec, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, after which the Public Procurement Regulatory Commission rejected requests from several municipalities for similar recruitments.

BIRN Kosovo received over 40 citizen reports on tax evasion, employees working without contracts, lack of fiscal cash registers or lack of proper business registration. After BIRN Kosovo submitted over 30 official complaints to TAK on these issues, TAK undertook 31 inspections against six (6) businesses, including insurance companies, cafe bars, taxi companies and a restaurant. TAK's inspections consequently found workers without contracts, unregistered businesses and a lack of fiscal cash registers. As a result, 20 fines worth €5,000 each were issued to businesses during April alone.

During 2021, KALLXO.com focused on monitoring the ethics of Kosovo Police officers, finding that over 900 police officers had indictments against them. As a result, more than 30 police officers have been fired. BIRN closely monitored violations of rules and laws by political parties during the election campaigns for the February

14 elections. Fourteen (14) complaints were submitted and 10 were approved by ECAP. From the approved complaints, ECAP issued €28,700 worth of fines to political parties who had violated the election rules. Moreover, ECAP approved 132 BIRN complaints about irregularities encountered during campaigns for the mayoral and local assembly elections that were held on November 14, and it filed €7,250 worth of fines as a result.

Between October and December 2021, BIRN Kosovo monitored the recruitment of Kosovo Security Force (KSF) soldiers, covering all stages of the recruitment process from the opening of the vacancy through to the physical test, intelligence test and general knowledge tests. Following BIRN Kosovo's monitoring, trust towards such KSF vacancies has increased. As a consequence of BIRN Kosovo's involvement, five (5) candidates were eliminated from the race and three (3) instructors were sent to a disciplinary commission and subsequently suspended. BIRN Kosovo also shared with KSF recruitment board members good interviewing practices that have been applied by BDO experts in recruitment assisted by the British Embassy.

In May 2021, BIRN Kosovo and I/KS launched and published the 15th Court Monitoring Report, which addressed the year 2020. The report focused on the sentencing practices employed by Kosovo's courts in corruption cases as well as the performance of the judiciary in handling these cases. BIRN Kosovo and I/KS requested and received judgements from every corruption case in Kosovo's courts in 2020, focusing on the 40 convictions achieved outside of plea bargain agreements. Analysis of these 40 judgements reveals that sentencing practices in corruption cases did not comply with the requirements of the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code or the Sentencing Guidelines adopted by the Supreme Court in 2018.

“I would like to congratulate BIRN Kosovo for the work they have done in compiling the Court Monitoring Report for 2020. This report highlights the factual situation in the justice system in Kosovo. Having such a comprehensive overview of the justice system in front of us forces us to work extremely hard in working towards improving it”.

Albulena Haxhiu

Minister of justice

“BIRN monitored the recruitment process for the selection of the Information and Privacy Agency commissioner. The involvement of BIRN Kosovo monitors in monitoring this recruitment process gave me, as a candidate, greater confidence that the process would be transparent. Therefore, based on the professionalism shown and full respect for confidential data during the monitoring of this process, we as an institution have invited BIRN Kosovo to monitor all recruitment processes that are planned to take place in the agency”.

Krenare Sogojeva Dërmaku

Commissioner of the Information and Privacy Agency

“The Tax Administration of Kosovo has excellent cooperation with BIRN Kosovo. We have received multiple cases from BIRN Kosovo that we have dealt with jointly through carrying out field actions in order to combat negative phenomena. Our joint actions have yielded concrete results, such as the formalisation of undeclared workers and the detection of tax evasion. We look forward to continuing this fruitful cooperation in the future”.

Nijazi Asllani

Deputy general director of operations at TAK

“The role of the media and civil society in general, but BIRN Kosovo in particular, in establishing and advancing the justice system is undeniable. Through monitoring, reporting, news, analysis and reports, this organisation has not only made us more transparent, but it has also helped us to see our shortcomings and to work towards addressing them. For years, BIRN Kosovo was our biggest partner, but also our biggest critic, and our relationship has worked out in the best way possible”.

Hasan Shala

Judge and former president of the Court of Appeals



training & media development

Throughout 2021, BIRN Kosovo delivered 79 training sessions, workshops and webinars to 561 beneficiaries, out of whom 418 were women. The training sessions, workshops and webinars were delivered to audiences such as: professional journalists, junior journalists, students of journalism, politics and law, other young people, high school students, civil society organisations, public officials, court monitors, technical staff, prosecutors, judges, teachers and other stakeholders.

These training activities covered issues including: fake news, fact-checking, the basics of investigative journalism, professional investigative journalism, televised investigations, media ethics, source protection, reporting on terrorism, public speaking, violent extremism and radicalisation, environmental issues and effective advocacy.

Between March and May 2021, BIRN Kosovo and I/KS held 60 workshops with teachers from across the country focusing on public speaking and presenting in front of the camera. The training sessions were organised in the municipalities of Gjakova, Prizren, Gjiilan, Ferizaj, Lipjan, Rahovec, Kamenica, Malisheva, Fushë Kosova, Obiliq, Vushtrri and Pristina. Up to three (3) teachers attended each workshop, with around 180 teachers trained in total. The training sessions were delivered by BIRN Kosovo and I/KS's editorial and technical teams.

In order to capitalise on an interest in journalism amongst young people, and in an attempt to plug the gap in the education system, BIRN Kosovo organised training sessions for high school students. This was within a programme that aims to nurture young talent by mentoring students in the production of videos, photos and articles in order to lay the path for increased

independence, transparency, accountability and civic engagement. The training sessions introduced the high school students to journalism, including topics such as journalistic language and concepts, reporting standards, photography tips, production materials for video content, video editing, investigative journalism, ethics and authors' rights. A total of 225 high school students took part in these training sessions, out of whom 171 were women.

At the end of each training session, the young people proposed their own journalistic ideas, which were collected by BIRN Kosovo's team. BIRN Kosovo selected 50 videos and article ideas that were published on the online platform [KALLXO Rinia](#) (Youth Speak Out). In 2021, KALLXO Rinia featured stories from high school students covering topics such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student life, students' mental health, the challenges of online learning, arts, culture and sports, to name a few.



“The training was very useful because journalism is a field I might take up during my studies and pursue professionally. Through this training I learned many new things about journalism that I had not been aware of before”.

Idila Binaku

Student at the “Ahmet Gashi” high school in Pristina

“I found the training very insightful. It introduced me to the key pillars of journalism and even made me consider pursuing journalism in university studies”.

Eris Haliti

Student at the “Frang Bardhi” high school in South Mitrovica



From July 24 to 27, 2021, BIRN Kosovo held training sessions on the Redirect Method — a technique developed to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism by utilising the power and influence that social media has today. The training sessions brought together officers from the Kosovo Police and the Ministry of Interior Affairs, legal and IT officers from courts and prosecution offices, and representatives of media and civil society organisations.

Additionally, on October 26, 2021, BIRN Kosovo organised a training session with journalists from local media outlets on the challenges of ethical reporting when facing violent extremism and terrorism situations. The training sessions were delivered by BIRN Kosovo’s team of journalists and legal experts.

“The training was very substantive and necessary for me as a journalist. I hope I never have to face situations of having to report on terrorism, but having undergone this training, I am ready to report correctly without being exploited by terrorist organisations and without arousing fear and endangering public safety through the information I publish in the media”.

Liridon Llozani

Journalist at RTV Dukagjini

BIRN Kosovo, in partnership with the International Press Institute, organised two two-day training sessions on fact-checking and tackling disinformation in Kosovo. The first session was led by lecturers from different renowned international organisations, including Africa Check and OSINT Essentials. The second two-day training session was led by various professional fact-checking journalists and lecturers from countries including the UK, Germany, Slovakia, Greece, Lithuania and Spain. A total of 102 participants took part in the training sessions, of whom 70 were women.

One of the most captivating activities that BIRN Kosovo implemented in 2021 was the organisation of free-of-charge, six-month Albanian and Serbian language courses for Albanian and Serb journalists, in partnership with the Serb TV broadcaster TV Mreža. A key aim of this activity was to promote greater cooperation between Albanian and Serb media, something that is largely missing in the current media environment. Through the course, 47 Albanian and Serbian language journalists learned each other's languages to not only understand the basics of writing and communicating in the other language but also to be able to read important news in Albanian and Serbian.

“If there was anything online that really worked in the best way possible, it was this course ... I think it really helped us a lot to access news in Serbian”.

Teuta Gashi

Albanian journalist

“The journalists that made it to the end were the ones who not only mastered the language but who also started to produce texts themselves, which is a very big achievement, given that the language course was relatively short”.

Dhurata Prokshi

Albanian language teacher

“The course, for me, has been extremely effective. I think it is important for Albanians to learn Serbian and Serbs to learn Albanian, if we want to live together”.

Aleksander Stojiljković

Serb journalist

“Within six months, participants reached A2 level, where they gained the initial competencies of exchanging ideas and basic expressions in Serbian. These six months have been very successful, and I can say without a doubt that they now have the competence to report on something basic in the Serbian language that is of interest to citizens”.

Edis Gulashi

Serbian language teacher

In 2021, BIRN Kosovo organised four (4) conferences with 216 participants (of whom 152 were women) and 34 public discussions with 369 participants (of whom 183 were women), with a particular focus on election topics. In total, 585 citizens participated in our conferences and public discussions, of whom 335 were women.

The topics discussed in the conferences and public discussions included important issues such as: i) violent extremism and terrorism; ii) the importance of ethical reporting, media outlets' hesitation to report on violent extremism and terrorism, and how to fight narratives in the battle against violent extremism and terrorism while raising public awareness instead of spreading fear, hatred and stigmatisation; iii) the rehabilitation and reintegration process of returnees to Kosovo from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq; iv) the goals of the European Green Deal, which Kosovo must pursue in order to ensure energy efficiency and to improve the local economy and public health; v) Sustainable Development Goals: public health and the wellbeing of the population, clean and affordable energy, and sustainable cities and communities; vi) the environmental challenges and exchange of environmental practices in Western Balkan countries; and vii) renewable energy policy in Kosovo, and the country's slow progress towards developing a greener energy sector.

Given that 34 public discussions were organised with citizens from Kosovo's municipalities on addressing their daily challenges, public debate topics also included issues such as concerns about municipal services, transparency and citizen involvement in decision-making processes, and the accessibility of local services.

"The Environmentally Responsible Action group had the opportunity to cooperate with BIRN Kosovo in implementing the EU-funded project 'Europeanisation of Kosovo's Environmental Agenda'. BIRN Kosovo is a professional organisation with highly competent staff. In the process of implementing the project, BIRN Kosovo was always eager to provide unsolicited support to our organisation. We look forward to working with them again in the future".

Adelina Kastrati

Project manager at the Environmentally Responsible Action (ERA) group in Peja, project partner in the EU-funded project "Europeanisation of Kosovo's Environmental Agenda"

"The Advocacy Training and Resource Center and BIRN Kosovo have a long history of cooperating in the implementation of various projects funded by various local and international donors. The professionalism and dedication of the BIRN Kosovo team is commendable. Our cooperation has yielded fruitful results, and we look forward to continue working together in the future".

Kushtrim Kaloshi

Executive director of the Advocacy Training and Resource Center



funding in 2021

Similarly to previous years, throughout 2021, BIRN Kosovo depended on the support of a wide range of Western governments, as well as independent and public partners, in order to continue its public impact and to sustain the organisation's internal capacities. The BIRN Kosovo team is profoundly appreciative of its donors for their steadfast support, which further fortified BIRN Kosovo in its aim to be a watchdog institution, monitoring the work of public institutions and bolstering Kosovo's progress towards the implementation of EU standards. BIRN Kosovo is looking forward to maintaining, nurturing and strengthening the existing relationships it has with key donors while continuing to broaden and deepen its funding base. A strong and growing base of support will be essential to continue our work.

The donors that supported BIRN Kosovo during 2021 are listed below, in alphabetical order:



Advocacy Training and
Resource Center (ATRC)



Macedonian Center
for International
Cooperation (MCIC)



Austrian
Development
Agency

Austrian
Development Agency
(ADA)



South East European
Network for
Professionalization
of Media (SEENPM)



Development Alternatives
Incorporated (DAI) Global,
LLC



Swedish International
Development
Cooperation Agency
(SIDA)



Decentralisation and Municipal Support (DEMOS)
– Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation



The Balkan Trust
for Democracy

A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND

The Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD)



European Union
Office in Kosovo



U.S.
Department of
State



Global Community
Engagement and
Resilience Fund
(GCERF).



U.S. Embassy in
Kosovo



Ambasciata d'Italia
Pristina

Italian
Embassy in
Kosovo



United Nations Interim
Administration Mission
in Kosovo (UNMIK)



International
Organization for
Migration (IOM)



Youth Initiative for
Human Rights (YIHR)



challenges ahead

BIRN Kosovo exists to provide momentum to the democratic transition process in Kosovo through the provision of accurate information to citizens, bridging the gap between government and citizens by increasing the latter's influence in key democratic processes and improving the capacities of local media and civil society organisations.

Kosovo still has weak accountability and reluctantly transparent institutions. Discrimination on the basis of gender, nationality, sex and networks persists. In addition, lack of reliable information stemming from the absence of competent media and professional journalists are all issues that persist in the big picture in the Kosovo of 2021.

In these circumstances, the biggest practical challenge for our organisation right now is that there is more corruption reported to us by the public than we are able to investigate with the number of journalists we currently have with the right legal and financial background.

However, this is a better problem to have than the challenges we faced when we first set up the organisation in 2005, when people were too scared to report corruption at all and we had to spend a lot of time convincing them to speak up. Notwithstanding, the fact that the majority of other media lack the financial independence, energy and know-how to investigate corruption adds a burden to our operations.

Widespread corruption at both the local and central levels continues to pose a serious threat to Kosovo's successful socio-economic development, contributing to a lack of trust in public institutions. Meanwhile, organised crime, particularly in the north of Kosovo, continues to pose a challenge for local law enforcement agencies.

Kosovo's media scene is also prone to corruption and often influenced by financial and other group interests that can shrink the space for BIRN's investigations to be properly disseminated. The more powerful the people we write about, the narrower the audience our story manages to reach, because often those we are writing about manage to be the advertisers who buy off the resilience of other media, making BIRN Kosovo and KALLXO.com look like the odd ones out.

Additionally, Kosovo continues to be a hostile place for marginalised communities, whereby discrimination on the basis of gender, nationality, gender, sex and ability permeates all spheres of society. Violence against women, lack of institutional recognition of LGBTQI+ people's needs and the absence of economic prospects for

Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali communities are only a fraction of the human rights violations that are committed daily against these groups.

Media in Kosovo often neglect these topics because, simply, they are after clicks, likes and views.

In light of these challenges, in 2022 BIRN Kosovo intends to keep the public informed through regular and specialised reporting in the form of investigative articles, fact-checking analyses, news based on information obtained from requests for access to official documents, roundtable discussions and conferences, televised debates, reports and town hall debates.

BIRN Kosovo will continue to apply pressure to increase transparency and accountability in public institutions, while advocating for change in policies and legislation that will better represent citizens' public interests. It will do so through actions that include analysing information, consolidating it and providing feedback and recommendations to legislative initiatives, initiating debate on policy processes, and organising events on public finances and public services.

Lastly, BIRN Kosovo intends to advance the capacities and operations of other media organisations, increase the impact and sustainability of media organisations, and improve the quality of journalism through formal and informal education. In order to do this, BIRN Kosovo plans to organise and deliver training sessions to local civil society organisations and media outlets on investigative journalism and fact-checking, support journalists through sub-grants, awards and fellowships, and provide training workshops and internships for young journalists at BIRN Kosovo's offices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank staff members and interns who were part of BIRN Kosovo and I/KS in 2021:

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Ejup Gojnovci

Elona Sejdullahu

Eraldin Fazliu

Fitim Limani

Jack Robinson

Rona Rushiti Begolli

Rron Agolli

Shkelqim Xhaqkaj

Shqipron Halimi

Shyhrete Maliqi

Tringa Ruka

Urim Krasniqi

Valon Sadiku

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