

Media Trust in Kosovo



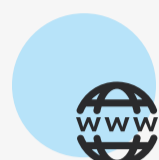
Overall, the citizens of Kosovo are not only heavy consumers of media but also place a lot of trust in the media. Despite a rapid increase in online media, television stands out as the main source of information for most people. Television is the dominant information channel in the country, with 82% of respondents claiming to use it on a daily basis to get information about political and social events.



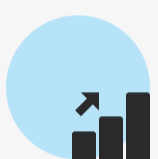
The IPSOS research shows that the main reasons why citizens do not trust certain media are related to spreading disinformation and propaganda and the political influence they are under (47%, 40% and 42%, respectively). In addition, more than a third of citizens do not trust certain media outlets due to the spreading of hatred (37%).



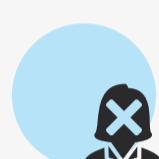
Social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube) are in second place as a source of news and information (65%), followed by online media such as news web portals, news magazines and news blogs (45%), personal contacts (44%), radio (9%) and print newspapers/magazines (5%).



The opinion poll shows that 67% of respondents believe that social networks spread political propaganda and disinformation.



As far as public trust in the media is concerned, the overall level of trust in the media in Kosovo, such as newspapers, TV, radio or online media, is higher (64%) than distrust (35%).



Women journalists in the country are often the target of attacks, threats, insults, and harassment. The majority of citizens believe that this is a consequence of the fact that they (women journalists) disclose the truth when they report on politics, corruption and crime as well as due to the prejudices and stereotypes about their gender.



When it comes to different types of media, citizens have the most confidence in the information they receive through television, as more than four fifths claim they mainly or completely trust television to be a reliable source of information (86%). Right behind are investigative media that enjoy the trust of one in seven citizens in Kosovo (70%).

Policy recommendations



The fight against fake news, misinformation and hate speech should be embraced collectively by all media professional content producers. The regulatory bodies such as the Independent Media Commission and the Press Council should act more vigorously when the Code of Ethics is violated.



A joint letter or agreement should be signed in public by Kosovo's political parties where they all commit not to feed hateful narratives that are damaging to the overall public sphere.



Online media and traditional media channels present in the online sphere should create a mechanism for monitoring and regulating hate speech in the comment sections of their media and their social media accounts, where people now express unfiltered hate speech.



The Kosovo Police should investigate hate speech on social media where applicable by law as well as xenophobia and gender-based derogatory language.



Self-regulation bodies should hold discussions with their members and urge them to take action in the comments sections of their online media, social media and networks when it appears.



Crimes against journalists should be prosecuted more vigorously. The legislators and law enforcement bodies should consider the option advocated by the journalists' organizations to give priority and introduce stronger sanctions when prosecuting attacks on journalists.



Kosovo media regulatory bodies such as the KPM and Press Council should reach the media with suggestions to jointly fight hate speech on social media through campaigns and proactive actions in schools and other education initiatives.



The media and the state authorities should offer women journalists special protection as they are more prone to threats and attacks due to prejudices and stereotypes.



Media organizations should increase their fact-checking mechanisms and collaborate more with the external fact-checking institutions and non-governmental organizations in countering hate speech.



Access to public information should improve. Government bodies should provide more and timely data on their websites.



The media should create anti-hate, anti-propaganda coalitions to fight inflammatory language in political communication.



More research and independent studies on the media are necessary from the research community and civil society organizations.



Political parties should instruct members and, in particular, their youth organizations to refrain from hateful and abusive language against one another.



Media literacy programmes and training should increase and also target citizens, i.e. ordinary media users, instead of media professionals only. Universities and research centres should provide more media literacy training, especially for students in secondary schools. The Ministry of Education should consider adding media literacy to the curriculum at the level of primary education. Addressing critical thinking, open discussion, tolerance and difference in opinion should start as early as primary and secondary school.



These are findings of the research on media trust in Kosovo conducted, in 2021, within the project "Resilience – Civil society action to reaffirm media freedom and counter disinformation and hateful propaganda in the Western Balkans and Turkey", implemented in seven countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

