



**POLICY  
ANSWERS**

## **Developments in the R&I Sector in Kosovo 2023-2025**

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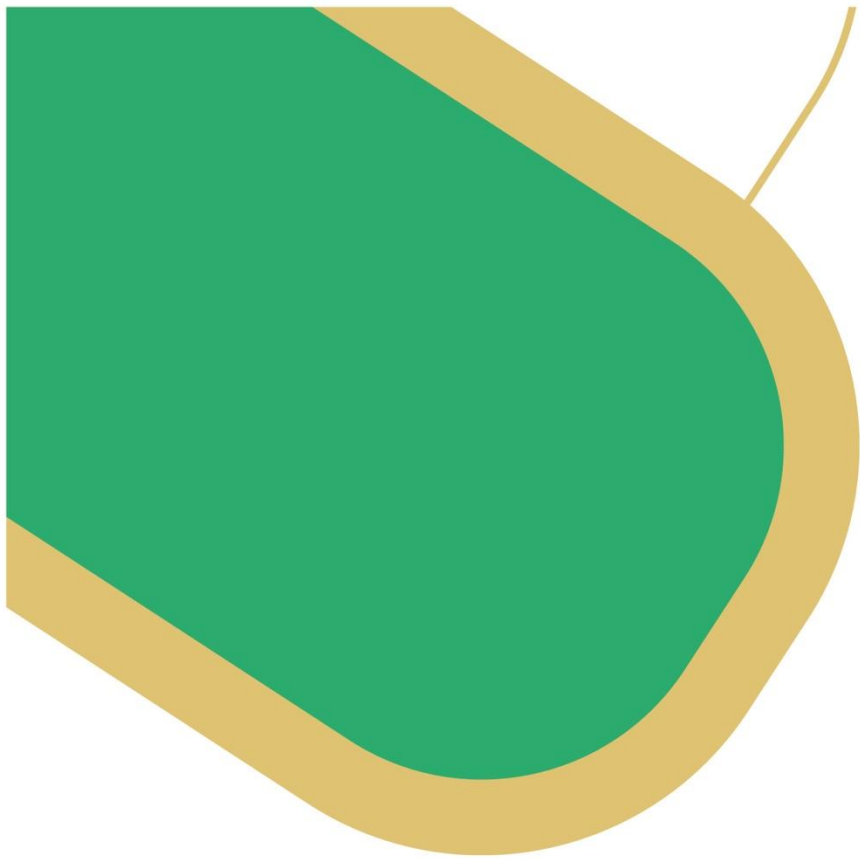
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## Acronyms and abbreviations used in this document

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ASHAK	Kosovo Academy of Sciences and Arts
COST	European Cooperation in Science and Technology
EC	European Commission
EIS	European Innovation Scoreboard
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
FP	Framework Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
IBCM	International Business College Mitrovica
KIESA	Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency
KRIS	Kosova Research Information System
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
MINT	Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Technology
MSME	Micro- and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
NSC	National Science Programme
NSP	National Science Programme
R&I	Scientific Research and Innovation
SHER	Sustainable Higher Education and Research Programme
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
UP	University of Pristina
WB	Western Balkans

## Summary and recommendations

Despite the efforts made so far, Kosovo\* has not yet managed to break out of the vicious circle of stagnation and significant backwardness in the field of research and innovation (R&I) compared to neighbouring countries in the region – let alone to the European Union (EU) member states with which it aspires to integrate.

Even three years after its adoption, the implementation of the National Science Programme (NSP) 2023-2028<sup>1</sup> has not yet begun, due to the lack of a legal basis – specifically, the new Law on Research and Innovation, which would enable its implementation, has not yet been approved. The extremely low budget allocated to this sector demonstrates that the Government of Kosovo lacks both the vision and the political will to make a decisive shift toward supporting the development of the R&I sector, allowing Kosovo at least to approach the performance of other Western Balkans<sup>2</sup> (WB) in this field. In recent years, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Kosovo (MESTI) has allocated between EUR 0.75 million and EUR 1.05 million per year to support R&I. However, even this modest budget has only been partially executed – at around 60 % implementation. Even in the NSP 2023, which is considered ambitious as it multiplies this symbolic budget to reach an annual average of about EUR 14.5 million, the legal requirement of allocating 0.7 % of Kosovo's national budget for R&I is still not met. The implementation of the NSP remains the main bottleneck and a persistent challenge for all efforts to develop the R&I sector. The limited implementation capacities of MESTI and other institutions responsible for supporting and implementing research and innovation remain a fundamental obstacle preventing the successful execution of national strategies for R&I development. This issue is closely linked to the current MESTI model for financing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which has caused universities and other HEIs to focus primarily on teaching, while research has not been treated as a priority. Academic staff are not incentivised to conduct scientific research, as this activity is not remunerated nor included in their contractual workload.

RIINVEST Institute recommends the following:

- The Government of Kosovo should make a serious commitment to drafting and approving the new Law on Scientific Research and Innovation as soon as possible, in order to establish the legal basis necessary to finally begin the implementation of the NSP 2023-2028. Equally important is the prompt adoption of the relevant legal and sub-legal acts (such as administrative instructions, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) statutes, etc.) that will operationalise the law.
- Public financing for the R&I sector must be significantly increased for Kosovo to overcome the current stagnation and catch up with other Western Balkans in this field. It is recommended that, within a three-year period, Kosovo reach at least the regional average of 0.5 % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) allocated from public funds for R&I.
- To ensure the effective absorption and utilisation of an increased R&I budget, special attention should be given to strengthening the implementation capacities of MESTI and of the new entities planned under the NSP, which will be responsible for implementing this national

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

<sup>1</sup> National Science Programme 2023-2028. <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Drafti-Shqip-PKSH-Final.pdf>. Accessed 10 December 2025

<sup>2</sup> The Western Balkans comprise Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

programme for the development of the R&I sector (such as the Agency/Fund for Scientific Research and the Innovation Fund)<sup>3</sup>.

- Reform the current HEIs funding model so that institutions are incentivised to prioritise engagement in R&I activities. Establish internal entities responsible for managing and administering research within academic institutions. The research work of academic staff should be explicitly included in their contracts, reflecting both the scope and the responsibilities of their workload.
- Increase financial and institutional support and enhance coordination among all R&I stakeholders to strengthen Kosovo's participation in the European Commission's Horizon Europe Programme, as well as in other EU funding mechanisms.
- In this context, special attention should be devoted to building the capacities of researchers, particularly through training on project preparation according to EU requirements.
- The Kosovo Agency of Statistics and other relevant institutions should take concrete measures to include Kosovo in the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) ranking, ensuring Kosovo's performance in innovation is systematically monitored and benchmarked.
- Establish a coalition of key R&I stakeholders to advocate with the Government of Kosovo for increased funding and complementary policy measures aimed at achieving a substantial transformation in the R&I sector – enabling Kosovo to overcome its current lag and align more closely with other Western Balkans.

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<sup>3</sup> These entities are foreseen under the National Science Programme 2023-2028 and the Draft Law on Scientific Research and Innovation.

# 1 Introduction

This short report has been prepared within the framework of the POLICY ANSWERS project<sup>4</sup>, supported by the European Commission's Horizon Europe programme. The project is implemented in Kosovo by Riinvest Institute as part of a consortium of European and Western Balkans institutes for the period March 2022-April 2026. The project's primary focus is to strengthen national capacities in the Western Balkans for a substantial increase in the participation of WB in the European Research Area (ERA) and to support evidence-based policymaking, particularly in key strategic priorities such as the green transition, digital transition and the development of healthy societies<sup>5</sup>. The purpose of this Policy Report is to present recent developments in the R&I sector in Kosovo over the past three years, following the adoption of the NSP 2023-2028. The analysis draws on official documents from Government institutions and other secondary sources, as well as interviews conducted with representatives of MESTI, the National Science Council (NSC) and the University of Prishtina. Additional data was sought from these institutions, from public universities and from international stakeholders engaged in the development of the R&I sector in Kosovo.

As highlighted in the POLICY ANSWERS reports<sup>6</sup>, the R&I sector in Kosovo began to develop relatively late – mainly during the 1970s and 1980s. However, following the revocation of Kosovo's autonomy and the subsequent period of centrally imposed administration in the 1990s, research and innovation activities were almost entirely interrupted, accompanied by the closure or degradation of research entities. The post-war period (after 1999) marked a complete restart of this sector, hindered by objective challenges and by insufficient institutional commitment from research and academic actors.

Despite continuous efforts, Kosovo still faces a significant lag in R&I compared to neighbouring countries in the region – and even more so when compared to the European Union. This gap is also reflected in Kosovo's limited participation in the ERA and its funding mechanisms, such as the Horizon Europe Programme and others.

Below, this report presents the current state of the R&I sector in Kosovo, focusing briefly on its most important aspects. On this occasion, the report also identifies some of the main reasons for Kosovo's aforementioned backwardness in this field.

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<sup>4</sup> POLICY ANSWERS. <https://westernbalkans-infohub.eu/>. Accessed 1 December 2025

<sup>5</sup> Within the framework of this project, Riinvest Institute implemented a very complex capacity building programme and published a series of analyses and reports such as: Berisha, I. et al. (2023). The research and innovation sector in Kosovo from the perspective of the research community (Report); Krasniqi, B. (2023). Advancing financing sources, policies and procedures for research and innovation in Kosovo (Report) and Mustafa, M. et al. (2023). Opinions and suggestions regarding the draft of the National Science Programme (NSP) 2023-2028 (Policy Brief). All references available from <https://westernbalkans-infohub.eu/resources/>. Accessed 10 December 2025

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

## 2 Main developments 2023-2025

### 2.1. Legal framework of the R&I sector

Kosovo has largely completed implementation of the legal framework regulating the development of the R&I sector, which currently includes the Law on Scientific Research Activities<sup>7</sup>, the Law on Scientific Innovation and the Transfer of Knowledge and Technology<sup>8</sup> and the Law on Higher Education<sup>9</sup>. However, various reports and assessments on the state of the R&I sector have identified a lack of sufficient harmonisation and synergy among these laws as a persistent challenge. To address this issue, the NSP 2023-2028 recommended integrating the Law on Scientific Research Activities and the Law on Scientific Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology into a single comprehensive law governing the R&I sector. Following the adoption of the NSP in 2023, the Government of Kosovo committed to drafting a new Law on Research and Innovation. Unfortunately, this process has not yet been finalised. According to representatives of MESTI and the NSC, the designated working group is still in the process of drafting the new R&I law.

### 2.2. Vision and development strategy of the R&I sector

Kosovo has adopted two key strategic documents in the field of R&I: the National Science Programme (NSP) of the Republic of Kosovo (2010) and the NSP 2023-2028, approved in 2023. The first NSP 2010 was only partially implemented. The reasons behind the unsuccessful implementation of this strategic document are primarily linked to a lack of vision and sustained commitment by the Government of Kosovo, insufficient budgetary allocations and limited implementation capacities within MESTI and research entities, as well as other R&I stakeholders.

The current NSP 2023-2028, drafted in 2022 and approved by the Government in 2023, is facing similar challenges and appears to be following the same trajectory as its predecessor. According to MESTI, the implementation of this strategic document has not yet begun, even three years after its drafting and approval. The main justification provided is the absence of an updated legal framework – specifically, that the new entities envisaged under the NSP (2023) for financing and implementing the national R&I strategy cannot be established until the new R&I Law is adopted.

### 2.3. Financing the R&I sector

The extremely low level of funding for R&I remains one of the fundamental obstacles to the development of this sector in Kosovo. According to the law, Kosovo is required to allocate 0.7 % of its national budget to finance R&I activities; however, in practice, the funds allocated have ranged between EUR 1 million and EUR 1.5 million per year, representing roughly 0.1 % of the total budget only. In recent years, this funding has fluctuated from EUR 755,500 in 2022 to EUR 1,050,000 allocated for 2025 and even this modest budget has been implemented only partially – approximately by 60 % – indicating a persistent gap between planning and execution (see Table 1). The NSP 2023-2028 projected a significant increase in budgetary resources for the R&I sector, with total funding of around EUR 87 million for the six-year period, or about EUR 14.5 million per year on average. Specifically, the budget requirements were projected at EUR 10.27 million for 2023,

<sup>7</sup> Law on Scientific Research Activities. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=8660>. Accessed 2 December 2025

<sup>8</sup> Law on Scientific Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology. [https://cps.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/LAW\\_NO\\_06\\_L-049\\_ON\\_SCIENTIFIC\\_INNOVATION\\_AND\\_TRANSFER\\_OF\\_KNOWLEDGE\\_AND\\_TECHNOLOGY.pdf](https://cps.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/LAW_NO_06_L-049_ON_SCIENTIFIC_INNOVATION_AND_TRANSFER_OF_KNOWLEDGE_AND_TECHNOLOGY.pdf). Accessed 2 December 2025

<sup>9</sup> Law on Higher Education. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2761>. Accessed 2 December 2025

EUR 15.33 million for 2024, EUR 17.92 million for 2025, EUR 17.91 million for 2026, EUR 12.93 million for 2027 and EUR 12.53 million for 2028. As a share of the total national budget, based on the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework<sup>10</sup>, these allocations remain very modest – 0.32 % in 2023, 0.49 % in 2024 and 0.56 % in 2025. When expressed as a share of GDP, the corresponding figures are 0.11 %, 0.15 % and 0.16 % respectively. For comparison, the average level of public funding for research in the Western Balkans is around 0.5 % of GDP, indicating that Kosovo still lags significantly behind regional peers in financing its R&I sector.

Table 1: Budget allocations for research and innovation from MESTI for the period 2022-2025 (amounts in EUR)

Scheme	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Planning (EUR)	% of realisation	Planning (EUR)	% of realisation	Planning (EUR)	% of realisation	Planning (EUR)	% of realisation
Small Grants Scheme for Scientific Research	200,000	56 %	200,000	73 %	200,000	58 %	200,000	128 %
Scientific publications scheme	50,000	42 %	50,000	49 %	50,000	26 %	50,000	40 %
Guarantee scheme for the teaching support programme Project HI '25 (ADA)	40,000	90 %			100,000	100 %		
International scientific mobilities and conferences	100,000	25 %	100,000	28 %	100,000	33 %	100,000	8 %
Bilateral projects Kosovo-Albania 2023-2025			160,000				160,000	100 %
Call for financial support for doctoral studies	365,500	100 %	365,500	100 %	586,500	100 %	600,000	
Call for postdoctoral fellowships							100,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>755,500</b>	<b>63 %</b>	<b>875,500</b>	<b>63 %</b>	<b>1,036,500</b>	<b>63 %</b>	<b>1,050,000</b>	<b>69 %</b>

<sup>10</sup> Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. <https://mfpt.rks-gov.net/Buxheti/Page/846>. Accessed 15 October 2025

Projections in Table 2 (below) anticipated a gradual increase in R&I funding until 2026, during which period the establishment of new entities such as the State Interdisciplinary Institute for Science and Technology and the National Research Infrastructure Fund was planned. However, there has been a serious deviation in the realisation of these projections for the period 2023-2025. In fact, some of the planned measures are no longer relevant, as their implementation deadlines have already passed due to delays in the execution of the NSP 2023-2028. They are referenced here merely to illustrate that even this strategic document falls short of demonstrating full commitment to meeting the legal requirement of allocating 0.7 % of the Kosovo budget to R&I, let alone exceeding this modest target to enable Kosovo to catch up with regional and EU developments and overcome the persistent cycle of stagnation and underperformance. As a result of the delay in launching the implementation of the NSP (2023-2028), MESTI has continued to operate under the old budgetary schemes for supporting the R&I sector<sup>11</sup> (see Table 1, above).

Table 2: Budgetary requirements for the NSP in relation to the budget and the GDP

	2023	2024	2025
(A) Budget requests by year for NSP activities (EUR) <sup>12</sup>	10,272,500	15,326,750	17,918,925
(B) Budget (EUR) <sup>13</sup>	3,212,000,000 <sup>14</sup>	3,113,000,000	3,203,000,000
(C) GDP (EUR) <sup>15</sup>	9,621,300,000	10,407,800,000	11,156,400,000
(A)/(B) Proportion of the budget	0.32 %	0.49 %	0.56 %
(A)/(C) Proportion of the GDP	0.11 %	0.15 %	0.16 %

## 2.4. Implementation

The implementation of the NSP continues to represent a bottleneck and a major challenge in all efforts to develop the R&I sector in Kosovo. MESTI is the institution responsible for implementing this strategic document. However, to date, the MESTI has repeatedly demonstrated limited capacity to effectively carry out development strategies in the R&I sector. Some aspects of this issue have been recognised in the NSP 2023-2028, which foresees the establishment of new entities or agencies that would assume key responsibilities for implementing the R&I sector strategy. Nevertheless, as previously noted, this process remains pending and is expected to take place in the coming years by MESTI.

## 2.5. Public research institutions

The main actors in conducting research in Kosovo are universities. However, they have been unable to adequately mobilise their potential for research due to the current model of financing. Specifically, the existing MESTI funding system for higher education institutions has led universities and other HEIs to prioritise teaching activities, while research remains secondary. As a result, public

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> National Science Programme 2023-2028. <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Drafti-Shqip-PKSH-Final.pdf>. Accessed 10 December 2025

<sup>13</sup> Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. <https://mfpt.rks-gov.net/Buxheti/Page/846>. Accessed 15 October 2025

<sup>14</sup> Budget Law for 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. <https://mfpt.rks-gov.net/Buxheti/Page/846>. Accessed 15 October 2025

universities in Kosovo allocate only a modest share of their budgets to R&I, which significantly limits their contribution to Kosovo's overall research output and innovation potential.

Table 3: Budget spent or allocated for research in public research institutions (all amounts in EUR)<sup>16</sup>

Budgetary organisation	2022	2023	2024	2025 (allocated)
University of Peja	273,556	188,582	291,726	315,000
University of Gjakova	175,241	176,070	232,267	357,640
Academy of Sciences and Arts	195,924	218,425	642,304	650,000
University of Pristina	116,700	205,400	210,900	459,000
University of Prizren	124,825	106,885	100,673	125,000
University of Gjilan	70,830	73,312	117,431	200,000
University of Mitrovica	338,500	306,955	313,790	364,182
University of Ferizaj	0	6,610.48	50,087	78,000
International Business College Mitrovica	-	-	53,850	131,000

Source: Data provided directly by the respective higher education institutions and the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo (upon request, 2025)

The data in Table 3 above reflect the degree of engagement of public universities and Kosovo that Academy of Sciences and Arts (ASHAK) in the field of R&I. It remains to be assessed in detail, but it appears the situation is even more challenging within private HEIs, with only a few minor exceptions. Academic staff at universities and HEIs are not sufficiently incentivised to engage in research, as such work is neither financially compensated nor contractually included in their workload. The publication of scientific and academic papers is largely treated as an individual obligation required only for academic promotion, rather than as a result of institutional research efforts. Consequently, once they achieve advancement, academic staff are often not motivated to continue conducting research or publishing their work.

This situation partly explains the so-called paradox of the “lack of absorptive capacity” among research institutions in Kosovo, which prevents them from fully utilising even the minimal annual budget of around EUR 1 million that MESTI has allocated in recent years for the R&I sector. Fundamentally, this phenomenon also helps to explain Kosovo's overall underperformance in R&I, as well as its limited success in cooperation and participation within European programmes supporting R&I development.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Data in Table 3 provided directly by the respective higher education institutions and the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo (upon request, 2025).

## 2.6. Performance in the R&I sector

Given the situation described in the previous section, it is not surprising to observe data reflecting the weak performance of universities and other research entities in the R&I sector. This is clearly illustrated by available data on the number of scientific and academic papers published by their academic and research staff. For instance, data for the University of Pristina (UP) (the most important and oldest HEI in Kosovo) show that the number of scientific and academic papers published by its staff, according to Scopus, was 519 in 2022, 561 in 2023, 677 in 2024 and 466 papers identified so far in 2025.<sup>17</sup>

Considering that the number of academic staff at the UP is approximately one thousand, this means that, on average, each academic staff member publishes one scientific or academic paper every two years. While this output remains modest, it is nonetheless encouraging that the data indicate a gradual upward trend in the number of publications by UP's academic staff over recent years.

## 2.7. International cooperation

In recent years, there has been growing attention and effort to strengthen the international cooperation of actors in Kosovo's R&I sector. Particular emphasis has been placed on participation in European programmes that promote and support international collaboration in R&I. Kosovo has achieved some initial results in programmes such as Horizon Europe and European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST).

Specifically, since the signing of Kosovo's Association Agreement with Horizon Europe in 2020, a total of 155 applications have been submitted by various research entities from Kosovo. Of these, 122 were assessed as eligible proposals, while only 15 successfully passed the evaluation threshold and received financial support, resulting in a success rate of 10.3 %. This rate is slightly lower compared to regional counterparts such as Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia (11.3-11.44 %), Bosnia and Herzegovina (12.75 %), while Serbia, with a success rate of 15.44 %, is closest to the EU average of around 16 percent (see Table 4).

Table 4: Overview of participation and Horizon Europe funding of Western Balkans<sup>18</sup>

	Grants signed	Success rate (in %)	Eligible proposals	Applications
Albania	44	11.41	360	482
Bosnia and Herzegovina	54	12.75	400	541
Kosovo	15	10.3	122	155
Montenegro	29	11.31	195	274
North Macedonia	69	11.32	454	636
Serbia	394	15.44	2087	2966

It should be noted that competition for funding under this European Commission (EC) programme is extremely high and the requirements and evaluation criteria are highly rigorous. Given that Horizon Europe is the largest research funding programme in the world – with a budget of EUR 95.5 billion allocated for the period 2021-2027 – improving Kosovo's participation in it is of

<sup>17</sup> Authors' compilation based on data retrieved from Scopus (Elsevier), search conducted for academic staff of the University of Pristina (2025). <https://www.elsevier.com/products/scopus>

<sup>18</sup> EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

[https://dashboard.tech.ec.europa.eu/qs\\_digit\\_dashboard\\_mt/public/extensions/RTD\\_BI\\_public\\_HE\\_Country\\_Profile/RTD\\_BI\\_public\\_HE\\_Country\\_Profile.html?Country=XK](https://dashboard.tech.ec.europa.eu/qs_digit_dashboard_mt/public/extensions/RTD_BI_public_HE_Country_Profile/RTD_BI_public_HE_Country_Profile.html?Country=XK) Data accessed and generated 9 September 2025.

strategic importance. It is expected that, with certain adjustments, this programme will continue beyond 2027 through the forthcoming Framework Programme (FP) 10, currently under negotiation. Therefore, it is essential that Kosovo undertakes systematic capacity building measures to enhance both the quantity and quality of applications submitted by its academic and research institutions<sup>19</sup>. At the same time, Kosovo has also made notable progress within the COST – a European intergovernmental framework aimed at strengthening scientific and technological cooperation through the funding of collaborative networks known as COST Actions. Unlike other EU programmes, COST does not directly finance research or infrastructure; rather, through its COST Actions, it supports international collaboration, mobility, knowledge exchange, training, and networking activities. For economies in transition toward EU-aligned research and innovation systems, such as Kosovo COST represents an important entry point for gradual integration into the ERA, as it increases researchers' exposure to ERA standards and practices while creating new partnership opportunities.

Data from the COST Association (2019-2024) show a steady and visible increase in Kosovo's participation. From only 18 Actions in 2019 (6.1 %), Kosovo reached participation in 169 Actions in 2024, representing 52.2 % of all existing Actions. Furthermore, the number of members from Kosovo in COST Working Groups has grown significantly – from 18 in 2019 to 380 in 2024 (see

Table 5).

Table 5: Kosovo's participation in COST Actions

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Participation in COST Actions (corresponding to total number of existing Actions)	18 6.16 %	28 9.62 %	41 14.2 %	78 25.8 %	135 39.7 %	169 52.2 %
Number of members in working groups	18	28	41	79	296	380
Use of networking instruments (number of individuals reimbursed)	14	6	8	37	82	89
Refund amount (EUR)	1,085	4,863	9,764	44,427	91,451	89,846

Source: Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), administrative data on Kosovo's participation in COST Actions, provided upon request (2025)

Another important and promising ongoing initiative of Kosovo's international cooperation in the field of R&I and higher education is the Sustainable Higher Education and Research Programme (SHER)<sup>20</sup>, jointly funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the MESTI. The programme aims to build a sustainable, evidence-based, and gender-responsive research and higher education sector in Kosovo. SHER focuses on improving higher education policies and frameworks, enhancing quality assurance, promoting research and innovation, fostering internationalisation and employability, and supporting gender equality, as well as the third mission of universities. Based on a comprehensive baseline assessment, the programme provides tailored support to MESTI in developing new laws, policies, and regulations – particularly in the area of performance-based funding. Working closely with the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, SHER has contributed to the review of doctoral standards through extensive consultations and has initiated the drafting of a new strategic document. At the institutional level, the programme has signed Memoranda of Understanding with all nine public HEIs in Kosovo, supported the UP in aligning its regulations with its new statute,

<sup>19</sup> Within the framework of the POLICY ANSWERS project, funded by Horizon Europe, Riinvest Institute has organised the training of two groups of 25 participants each for applications to Horizon Europe. Other WB economies, such as Serbia, have also engaged external experts with Government support to increase capacities for the preparation of proposals for application to this project.

<sup>20</sup> Sustainable Higher Education and Research in Kosovo (SHER). <https://sher-kosovo.org/#>. Accessed 4 December 2025.

and provided expertise to other HEIs in reviewing their strategic and statutory documents. Moreover, SHER has launched doctoral and postdoctoral fellowship calls for researchers from Kosovo working in Austria and supported the development of Kosovo's first joint and double degree programmes.

In support of the NSC, several proposals for national programmes have been developed – such as those aimed at promoting the creation of new and spin-off businesses and enhancing cooperation with the scientific diaspora. The project has also provided expertise for the drafting of the new Law on Scientific Research and Innovation, which consolidates previous legislation on research, innovation, and knowledge transfer, as well as for the further development of the Kosovo Research Information System (KRIS) platform<sup>21</sup>. The KRIS platform is envisioned to serve as a national repository containing comprehensive information on researchers, institutions, projects, and research infrastructure. SHER also provides financial and technical support to HEIs to review or develop institutional strategies and strengthen their internationalisation efforts. Furthermore, the project has introduced a seed funding scheme to support the preparation of Horizon Europe proposals and has contributed to strengthening the National Contact Point (NCP) system in Kosovo.

## 2.8. Research ethics and gender equality

Although Kosovo is associated to Horizon Europe and thus also to the ERA activities, it not formally committed to the ERA policy agenda. R&I actors and stakeholders have nonetheless made efforts to align national policies, development strategies, and institutional frameworks with ERA priorities<sup>22</sup>. Notably, significant progress has been achieved under ERA Action 3 through the implementation of the project “Enhancing Research Culture in Higher Education in Kosovo (ResearchCult)”<sup>23</sup>, which has resulted in the development of national guidelines on research ethics, the establishment of university ethics boards, and improved access to plagiarism detection tools. According to the ERA Country Report 2024, these developments mark a substantial improvement compared to previous years, when institutional mechanisms for the ethical evaluation of research were almost non-existent<sup>24</sup>. The SHER project, mentioned earlier, has also contributed to the establishment of ethics councils across public universities in Kosovo. For instance, according to UP officials, this HEI has established a Research Ethics Council and drafted a Code of Research Ethics<sup>25</sup>.

In the same spirit of aligning with ERA priorities, HEIs and other research entities in Kosovo have also addressed gender equality issues. In line with ERA Action 5, all public universities have now drafted and approved gender equality plans. The UP, for example, has adopted its detailed Gender Equality Plan 2023–2025<sup>26</sup> and established a dedicated Centre for Human Rights and Gender Equality<sup>27</sup>. These initiatives have also been supported by the SHER project.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Kosovo Research Information System (KRIS). <https://kris.rks-gov.net/>. Accessed 9 October 2025.

<sup>22</sup> ERA Country Report 2024 Kosovo. <https://westernbalkans-infohub.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/ERA-Country-Report-2024-Kosovo.pdf>. Accessed 10 October 2025.

<sup>23</sup> Research-Cult Project. (2022). Enhancing Research Culture in Higher Education in Kosovo. WBC-RR1.NET. Retrieved from <https://wbc-rr1.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/KOS-Enhancing-Research-Culture-in-Higher-Education-in-Kosovo.pdf>. Accessed 9 October 2025.

<sup>24</sup> ERA Country Report 2024 Kosovo. <https://westernbalkans-infohub.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/ERA-Country-Report-2024-Kosovo.pdf>. Accessed 10 October 2025.

<sup>25</sup> University of Prishtina. (2025). Code of Ethics for Academic Staff. Available at: <https://dokumente.uni-pr.edu/kodietikes>. Accessed October 2025.

<sup>26</sup> Gender Equality Action Plan of University of Prishtina. [https://uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=1%2C37%2C2320&fbclid=IwAR2r5yRk\\_TyZkXP7CEWsMUc0Ef6c1F\\_brTHK\\_wXbj9PcNFj2IVt8FJkPX4s](https://uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=1%2C37%2C2320&fbclid=IwAR2r5yRk_TyZkXP7CEWsMUc0Ef6c1F_brTHK_wXbj9PcNFj2IVt8FJkPX4s). Accessed 3 October 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Centre for Human Rights and Gender Equality. <https://uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=2,132>. Accessed October 2025.

## 2.9. Data system and monitoring

In April 2023, KRIS was officially launched, following the start of its pilot phase in January 2023<sup>28</sup>. KRIS is designed as a centralised national platform for the collection and storage of data on R&I in Kosovo. It serves as a national repository providing comprehensive information on research activities, with the aim of strengthening research capacities, informing policy-making, and generating statistical reports for relevant stakeholders. As such, KRIS is expected to significantly improve the monitoring of developments in the R&I sector and enhance the quality and availability of data for evidence-based policymaking in this field. The system was developed through the collaboration between MESTI, the HERAS Plus project<sup>29</sup> and the ResearchCult project, while the SHER project has subsequently contributed to its further development.

## 2.10. Innovation

Since its establishment in 2018, the Department of Innovation at the Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade (MINT) has undergone several institutional shifts, reflecting changing governmental structures and priorities in the field. Initially operating within the former Ministry of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, it was temporarily transferred to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in early 2020, then to the Ministry of Economy and Environment later that year and has since functioned under the MINT since 2021. From 2018 onwards, considerable investments have been made to expand Kosovo's innovation infrastructure. The largest investment concerns the Innovation and Training Park in Prizren (ITP), co-financed with EUR 8 million from the Kosovo budget and EUR 5.7 million from the German Government through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ<sup>30</sup>). In addition, a series of regional and university-based innovation centres have been established, including major investments at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the University of Prishtina, the University "Isa Boletini" in Mitrovica, as well as centres in Ferizaj, Shtime and, most recently, the new incubator at the University "Haxhi Zeka" in Peja planned for implementation during 2025-2026.

Alongside infrastructure investments, the Department of Innovation and Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA<sup>31</sup>) have implemented several financial support instruments aimed at stimulating innovative entrepreneurship. The two Innovation Grant Schemes in 2018 and 2019 each allocated around EUR 1 million, supporting 160 and 96 beneficiaries respectively, with awardees required to register as businesses. During 2019-2020, a co-financed Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) grant programme funded by GIZ and MINT provided EUR 1.2 million, while in 2018, EUR 2 million was distributed to NGOs implementing innovation-related projects. In 2024, a joint MINT/KIESA and Lux-Dev scheme<sup>32</sup> supported 49 businesses with EUR 1.9 million. Innovation criteria have also been incorporated into wider business support schemes, including the Digital Empowerment Programme<sup>33</sup> (EUR 350,000 with 62 beneficiaries in 2024) and the ICT grant scheme<sup>34</sup> (EUR 1 million, 62 beneficiaries so far in 2025). MINT also reports that new schemes for the creative industries, energy efficiency and digitalisation are under development and expected to support around 40-45 beneficiaries in total.

<sup>28</sup> Kosovo Research Information System (KRIS). <https://kris.rks-gov.net/>. Accessed 9 October 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Higher Education, Research and Applied Science (HERAS). <https://heraskosovo.org/home/>. Accessed October 2025.

<sup>30</sup> Innovation Technology Park (ITP) <https://itp-prizren.com>. Accessed 4 October 2025.

<sup>31</sup> Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency. <https://kiesa.rks-gov.net/>. Accessed October 2025.

<sup>32</sup> MINT/KIESA, Lux Dev scheme. <https://kiesa.rks-gov.net/Page.aspx?id=2,5,899>. Accessed 29 November 2025.

<sup>33</sup> Digital Empowerment Programme. <https://mint.rks-gov.net/Page.aspx?id=2%2C3%2C1539&utm>. Accessed 3 October 2025.

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade & Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency. (2025). Public call for financial support to MSMEs in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. <https://kiesa.rks-gov.net/page.aspx?id=2%2C5%2C978>. Accessed 3 October 2025.

These developments illustrate an increasing effort by public institutions to strengthen the innovation ecosystem through infrastructure, financial support instruments and regional distribution of innovation facilities. However, the sustainability and long-term impact of these initiatives will largely depend on coordination with R&I policy, continuity of funding and improved integration with higher education and research institutions.

Unlike other WB economies in the region, Kosovo has not yet been included in the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS), which evaluates and compares countries' achievements in the field of innovation. This exclusion represents a significant challenge, as it limits Kosovo's visibility and benchmarking opportunities within the broader European innovation ecosystem. Furthermore, available data on innovation support reveal similar weaknesses to those observed in the area of R&I – namely, limited funding, fragmented institutional coordination and underdeveloped implementation mechanisms.

In an effort to address these issues, MINT has drafted a new Law on Innovation and Entrepreneurship<sup>35</sup>, which foresees the establishment of an Innovation Fund intended to finance innovation-related activities and stimulate greater engagement between academia, industry and the private sector.

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<sup>35</sup> Draft Law on Innovation and Entrepreneurship <https://konsultimet.rks.gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=42184>. Accessed 2 October 2025.



## ABOUT POLICY ANSWERS

POLICY ANSWERS (R&I POLICY making, implementation ANd Support in the WEsteRn BalkanS) supports policy coordination in the Western Balkans and with the EC and the EU. 14 partner organisations, representing network nodes in the region and EU expert organisations, support policy dialogue through formal meetings (such as ministerial and steering platform and ad-hoc policy meetings), monitoring and agenda setting, capacity building and implementation of the EU's Western Balkan Agenda, as well as the alignment of thematic priorities. The project implements regional pilot activities and offers an information hub based on the [westernbalkans-infohub.eu](http://westernbalkans-infohub.eu) online information platform. The partners provide analytical evidence via monitoring and mapping activities of the stakeholder ecosystem, of the implementation of the Western Balkans Agenda and of the Western Balkans' integration into the European Research Area as well as via strategic foresight. POLICY ANSWERS also allows for tailored and targeted capacity building activities in the Western Balkans as well as regional alignment of priorities in relation to the digital transformation, the green agenda and towards healthy societies. Pilot activities provide learning opportunities on policy and programme level and reach out to final beneficiaries related to improved academia-industry cooperation, researcher mobility, inclusion of youth in policy processes, promotion of research infrastructures and increased innovation skills in all areas.

