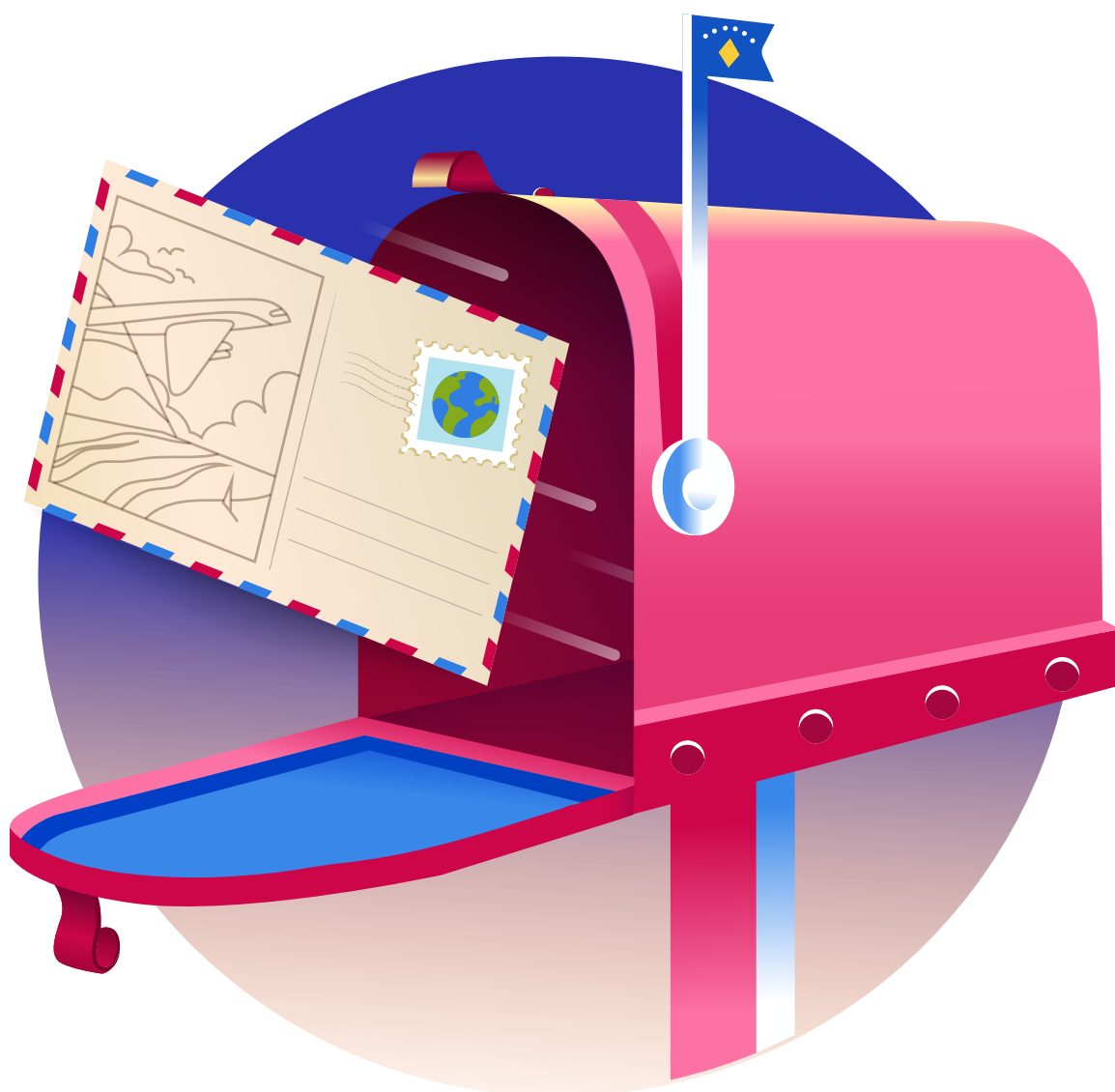


# Strengthening the capacities of municipalities for diaspora engagement in Kosovo



February 2026



Implemented by



Strengthening the capacities  
of municipalities for diaspora  
engagement in Kosovo  
**Needs Assessment report**

February 2026

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## List of acronyms

AIS	Agency of Information Society
AKM	Association of Kosovo Municipalities
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
B2B	Business-to-Business
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCYS	Directorate for Culture, Youth and Sports
DED	Directorate for Economic Development
FDI	Foreign Direct Investments
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KCGF	Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund
KIESA	Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency
MCYS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
MFAD	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora
MINT	Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

## Executive summary

Diaspora engagement remains a critical socio-economic and political priority for Kosovo, given the significant proportion of its population residing abroad. This report presents a comprehensive assessment of diaspora-related services at the municipal level in Kosovo, with the aim of identifying practical interventions that can improve local engagement, service delivery, and coordination with diaspora communities. The findings of this report highlight the persistent structural and institutional challenges that limit the realization of the immense potential of Kosovo's diaspora in contributing to local development. Despite the strategic importance of the diaspora, Kosovo lacks a legally binding framework that ensures consistent, inclusive, and well-coordinated support for diaspora engagement at the municipal level. As a result, services provided to the diaspora vary significantly between municipalities, ranging from dedicated directorates and full-time diaspora officers to minimal or ad hoc support.

Administrative services remain the most common form of local diaspora engagement, focused primarily on civil status documentation and property registration. Several municipalities have taken steps to improve the quality and accessibility of these services, especially during peak return periods, but broader economic and cultural engagement remain limited. Innovative approaches are emerging in municipalities such as Kamenica, Gjilan, and Vushtrri, where initiatives include tailored investment consultations, public-private partnerships, and digital platforms to monitor local businesses and connect with diaspora investors.

In this report, GAP Institute also points to important gaps in coordination between local and central institutions. The lack of structured communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD) has resulted in duplicated efforts, policy incoherence, and limited access to national programs. Furthermore, municipalities often lack the resources and legal clarity required to create new diaspora-related positions or integrate diaspora affairs into long-term planning. This report outlines complementary interventions aimed at strengthening municipal engagement with diaspora communities. Appointing full-time diaspora officers would provide institutional continuity and enable municipalities to better coordinate investment, cultural exchange, and partnership opportunities. Targeted public funding to CSOs and local businesses would support grassroots initiatives and foster sustainable links with the diaspora. Moreover, upgrading digital infrastructure, through integrated municipal websites and active social media channels, would facilitate more accessible and responsive communication with diaspora members. Lastly, integrating a gender-sensitive approach would ensure that the specific needs and contributions of diaspora women are recognized and supported through inclusive programming and data-driven policymaking.

# 1. Introduction

Kosovo is considered to have one of the largest diaspora populations in Europe in proportion to its domestic population.<sup>1</sup> According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, around 338,000 people, nearly 19% of the population, emigrated between 2012 and 2022, while only about 91,800 immigrated during the same period.<sup>2</sup> The peak was in 2015, when over 74,000 people left and nearly 19,000 returned, resulting in the highest annual net loss of around 55,500.<sup>3</sup> This trend reflects a growing diaspora and underscores the need for more structured policies at both the national and local levels.

Remittances from the diaspora contribute substantially to Kosovo's GDP, accounting for approximately 12% annually.<sup>4</sup> The remittances have historically provided a critical safety net during times of crisis (e.g., post-war recovery, financial instability, and the COVID-19 pandemic).<sup>5</sup> Beyond remittances, the diaspora contributes to Kosovo through investments, philanthropy, knowledge transfers, political advocacy, and social development initiatives.<sup>6</sup> However, the legal framework regulating diaspora status and rights remains outdated, creating uncertainty in the institutional recognition and treatment of Kosovo's diaspora. Municipalities are granted a degree of autonomy under Kosovo's decentralization policies, enabling them to support diaspora-related services and investment initiatives. In practice, however, the implementation of these powers varies widely across municipalities.

## 2. Methodology

This report aims to analyze the current municipal structures in regards to the level, type, and quality of services provided to the Kosovo diaspora. In addition, it seeks to offer a clear overview of the current situation and outline the steps that need to be taken to further advance these services and their institutional structure.

To achieve that, the assessment draws on a combination of primary and secondary data sources, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis. The primary data was gathered through eight short, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives from institutions and organizations involved in diaspora-related work (Annex 2). The selection of municipalities for the interviews was designed to ensure a balanced representation of Kosovo's local governance structures. It included three larger municipalities in terms of population (Prizren, Ferizaj, and Gjilan), three medium to small municipalities (Vushtrri, Suhareka, and Lipjan) and two smaller municipalities (Kamenica and Dragash) each from diverse geographical regions.

Additionally, a focus group was conducted with public officials representing 13 municipalities across Kosovo, representatives from MFAD and the Association of Kosovo Municipalities. The municipalities participating in this focus group discussion along with MFAD and AKM included the Municipality of Drenas, Obiliq, Gjakova, Peja, Gjilan, Prishtina, Kacanik, Suhareka, Klina, Lipjan, Prizren, Mamusha, and Ferizaj. The aim was to capture a variety of perspectives on diaspora engagement at the local level. The composition of the focus group included four

1 Gollopeni. B. Kosovar Emigration: Causes, Losses and Benefits , 2016.

2 Kosovo Agency of Statistics, [Population Assessment Reports](#), 2012-2022.

3 Ibid.

4 World Bank. [Western Balkans regular economic report](#), spring 2025.

5 World Bank. [The economic and social impact of COVID-19: The country notes](#), 2020.

6 Lubeniqi, G., Haziri, A., & Avdimetaj, K. [The impact of remittances on economic growth and reduction of poverty in emerging markets: The case of Kosovo](#). *Journal of Governance and Regulation*, 12(4S1), 180-189. 2023.

women and 18 men, reflecting attention to gender representation within local institutions. This reflects the broader issues of women's underrepresentation in local governance. Out of the 6,103 employees in municipalities, women make up only 2022 or 33% of the total<sup>7</sup>. In addition to the focus group, primary data collection also intended to involve an online survey distributed to all municipalities.<sup>8</sup> However, only three municipalities responded to the questionnaire. Further, interviews were also conducted with two organizations specializing in diaspora engagement, and one organization focused on gender mainstreaming, in order to analyze the perspective of civil society on the topic.

Secondary data collection consisted of an extensive review of the relevant institutional, legal, and policy frameworks that guide diaspora engagement at the local level. This was complemented by desk research and a literature review aimed at identifying regional and international best practices.

## 3. Review of institutional, legal, and policy frameworks

### — 3.1. Legal framework

Although Kosovo adopted the Law on Diaspora and Migration in 2012,<sup>9</sup> the development of a new law is considered essential due to a range of legal, institutional, and practical shortcomings that have become increasingly evident over the past decade, according to the interviewed stakeholders. The 2012 law is now widely viewed as outdated and narrowly focused, prioritizing cultural identity and remittances in line with post-independence concerns, but failing to reflect recent developments in diaspora engagement such as digital diplomacy, dual citizenship, knowledge transfer, and political inclusion.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the law suffers from weak enforcement, with many of its provisions remaining unimplemented due to a lack of institutional accountability, funding, and oversight. Its vague distribution of responsibilities across multiple ministries and municipalities has led to fragmentation and inefficiency. This includes the duties and responsibilities of diaspora coordinators, as well as the oversight mechanism.

A draft law<sup>11</sup> was introduced in 2018 and passed its first reading in the Assembly in 2019, but it was never voted into final law. As of 2025, the Law on Diaspora remains in draft form, and is included in the government's legislative agenda with a target adoption date of December 2026.<sup>12</sup> Kosovo has not approved the new draft law on diaspora yet or any binding national strategy for diaspora engagement. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD), through its Department of Diaspora, has produced several draft versions of a National Diaspora Strategy, most notably the draft for 2021–2025, but this strategy has not been formally adopted by the Government or the Assembly of Kosovo.

7 GAP Institute. [Employment of women and their representation in Kosovo, 2020](#).

8 Due to the lack of officials whose duties are fully related to diaspora engagement, there were only three questionnaires delivered.

9 Official Gazzete of the Republic of Kosovo. [Ligji nr. 04/L - 095 për diasporën dhe migratën](#). 2022.

10 Interview notes.

11 Public Consultations platform. [Draft Law on Diaspora](#).

12 Office of the prime minister. [Program of Draft Laws of the Government for the Years 2025-2027](#).

The draft law reportedly envisions a number of structural reforms, including the formal establishment of Municipal Diaspora Coordinators, the creation of diaspora registers, and the promotion of institutional partnerships between local governments and diaspora associations.<sup>13</sup> These provisions reflect a more coherent vision of how diaspora engagement could be integrated into the local governance framework.

However, the lack of formal adoption of the new draft law or the strategy has rendered these initiatives non-binding and, consequently, non-operational. Without legislative endorsement by the Assembly or government approval of the strategy, municipalities are under no legal obligation to implement these proposals. This situation has limited the practical impact of the reforms and contributed to a continued lack of uniformity in service delivery across municipalities.

The same limitations apply to the draft National Strategy for Diaspora 2021–2025 based on the new draft law, which, although circulated among institutional and civil society stakeholders, remains a non-executive document. Some of its goals have been pursued through pilot initiatives or donor-supported projects, but in the absence of formal approval, the strategy does not carry legal force and cannot be integrated into municipal development plans or budgeting processes. Thus, its implementation remains uneven and largely symbolic.

The Law on Local Self-Government provides municipalities with the authority to establish international cooperation and partnerships (Article 17), yet it does not explicitly assign municipalities responsibilities for diaspora engagement.<sup>14</sup> This has led to interpretive ambiguities in the allocation of competencies between central and local government institutions.

### — 3.2. Local-level institutional mechanisms in diaspora engagement

Municipal engagement with diaspora communities in Kosovo remains uneven and largely dependent on the discretion, capacity, and initiative of individual municipalities. The absence of a clear legal framework plays a central role in this inconsistency. Municipal authorities are not legally obliged to provide tailored diaspora services, such as assistance with property documentation, facilitation of voting abroad, cultural programming, or support for diaspora-driven investments, nor is there a national strategy that defines municipal responsibilities. This legal vagueness limits municipalities' ability to allocate resources for diaspora-focused activities, leaving them to rely on short-term donor funding, ad hoc internal initiatives, or discretionary budgeting. It also contributes to weak institutional coordination between central authorities, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD) and local governments. There is no formal mechanism for vertical coordination or data sharing, leading to duplication of efforts, fragmented outreach, and policy inconsistency.

Within this ambiguous framework, municipalities have adopted a range of institutional arrangements. Some have established formal structures, such as diaspora directorates, sectors, or dedicated offices, while others have created smaller units or lack any diaspora-related infrastructure altogether. Vushtrri stands out with a functioning Diaspora Directorate, while Suhareka, which previously had such a directorate, now operates with a smaller sector. In other cases, diaspora responsibilities are integrated into broader portfolios. Kamenica assigns diaspora-related tasks to staff working through service contracts

<sup>13</sup> Public Consultations platform. [Draft Law on Diaspora](#).

<sup>14</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo. [Law No. 03/L-040 on Local Self-Government](#).

(which should be renewed every 6 months, and the same person may not get the position), while Vushtrri engages diaspora officer as interim solution to staff working on European integration. Recent developments show increasing attempts at institutionalization; for example, Gjilan and Podujeva have opened official posts for “Coordinator for Diaspora Investments,” a position included in the Civil Service Job Catalog of the Ministry of Local Government Administration.

Beyond institutional structures, municipalities also vary in the range and quality of their services. Several municipalities, including Vushtrri, Kamenica, Gjilan, Suhareka, Prizren, Lipjan, and Ferizaj, maintain databases of diaspora-owned businesses or extend service hours and open additional service counters during peak diaspora return periods in the summer. Gjilan has introduced fast-track property registration and longer shifts to better accommodate diaspora needs, while municipalities like Vushtrri and Kamenica have implemented active outreach mechanisms to keep diaspora informed of local developments. Many municipalities have also appointed diaspora coordinators or advisory councils responsible for engaging diaspora in municipal planning, identifying investment opportunities, organizing visits and forums, and liaising with embassies and consulates.

The benefits of clear internal structures and defined roles are most visible in Vushtrri, where the dedicated diaspora office has facilitated twinning agreements with European municipalities, supported professional exchange programs, and attracted direct investments from diaspora businesses. The municipality's ability to maintain comprehensive databases, collaborate more effectively with central institutions, apply for external funding, and coordinate Business-to-Business (B2B) events demonstrates how institutional commitment can transform diaspora engagement into a driver of local economic and social development.

## 4. Stakeholder consultations and analysis of the findings

### — 4.1. Municipal capacities and structures for diaspora engagement

From an administrative perspective, most municipalities in Kosovo, particularly the smaller ones, struggle with a shortage of staff<sup>15</sup>. This challenge is particularly visible in the management of diaspora affairs. Instead, diaspora-related responsibilities are often added to the workload of municipal employees with other full-time duties, leading to fragmented and inconsistent engagement. However, there are exceptions, like Suhareka, Vushtrri and Kamenica, which have institutionalized their commitment to diaspora affairs through dedicated directorates or sectors, offering a more stable and visible point of contact for diaspora communities. Kamenica has also taken proactive steps by appointing a full-time coordinator responsible for both tourism and diaspora, integrating the role into its broader development strategy.

In general, budgetary and legal restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Finance have made it difficult for municipalities to create new positions with separate budget lines<sup>16</sup>. As a result, diaspora officers, where they exist, are often employed part-time, without clear defined responsibilities. While Podujeva and Gjilan

<sup>15</sup> A statement mentioned by many smaller municipalities during in-depth interviews.

<sup>16</sup> This was also a common reason underlined by the officers in municipalities where interviews took place.



have recently opened new positions for diaspora officers, their job descriptions remain vague and unclear.<sup>17</sup> This in turn creates problems to adequately hire the staff for this matter. Contrary to Podujeva and Gjilan, municipalities such as Vushtrri and Kamenica, have developed clearer mandates. For instance, the job description for diaspora officials at the municipality of Kamenica clearly outlines the main responsibilities of the official. They require that the official maintains the database of diaspora businesses, organizes meetings with diaspora organizations, coordinates and organizes trade fairs between local and diaspora businesses, offers support for business from diaspora members who wish to return to Kosovo, and recommends policy making at municipality level that supports the interests of Diaspora community.

One important factor that creates discrepancies in dealing with the community of diaspora is the diversity of professions of officials engaged in dealing with diaspora. For instance, some municipalities engage officials from the Directorate for Culture, Youth and Sports (DCYS), some others from the Directorate for Economic Development (DED), and some from other Directorates. This creates an inconsistent approach because those officials who are dedicated to cultural activities might not have a clear view on economic aspects of diaspora services and engagement, and vice versa.

Nevertheless, there is agreement among municipal officials of the need for at least one fully dedicated diaspora officer. This argument has been supported also by MFAD officials. However, the Municipality of Gjakova, for example, questioned the necessity of such a role, arguing it might duplicate existing municipal functions.

## — 4.2. Service provision

Most diaspora services provided at the local level remain administrative in nature, centered around civil status documents and property registration. These services, while essential, do not yet address the broader potential for economic engagement or development cooperation. For example, Gjilan offers a fast-track service for property registration (completed within five days)<sup>18</sup> and applies fixed utility tariffs for diaspora residents in order to ensure fair and simplified billing. During the summer season, municipalities across Kosovo extend working hours and open offices on Saturdays to accommodate returning diaspora members. Kamenica, in particular, has established two dedicated service counters during the summer months, ensuring diaspora receive fast and customized support.

Importantly, some of the pressure on municipalities to deliver civil status documentation has been alleviated by the recent digitalization of civil registry services. This improvement has streamlined service delivery and reduced the burden on administrative staff during peak periods of diaspora return.

Nevertheless, interviews conducted with the Civil Registration Agency of Kosovo revealed that many diaspora members continue to travel to Kosovo to obtain documents that are technically available to them through consular services in their countries of residence and/or online. This is a consequence of the lack of awareness and accessibility of consular channels. Data from the Civil Registration Agency shows that a total of 35,059 passports and 15,792 ID cards were issued through consular services abroad in 2024. The highest demand was in Germany,

<sup>17</sup> Vacancy published in the official website of the Municipality of Gjilan: <https://gjilan.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Konkurs-%E2%80%93-Zyrtar-i-koordinimit-te-investimeve-te-diaspores.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> There is however no legal document that regulates this issue. As the official for Diaspora in Gjilan says, this is rather a political attitude inside the municipality rather than a specific regulation.

particularly in Munich, Stuttgart, Dusseldorf, and Frankfurt, reflecting the large Kosovar diaspora there. Switzerland also recorded high numbers, especially in Zurich, Geneva, and Bern. Other active consulates included those in Brussels, Paris, Strasbourg, and Milan. In contrast, consulates in places like Iowa, Canberra, and Prague processed very few documents.

Some municipalities are about to explore more innovative approaches. Gjilan, took the example of Peja and has proposed setting up tourist information points for diaspora visitors. Meanwhile, Kamenica has implemented a digital platform for real-time monitoring of local businesses, helping the municipality track economic activity and engagement, as diaspora interest in investment continues to rise. However, broader gaps persist. Many municipalities lack dedicated economic services for the diaspora, and few have mechanisms to support structured partnerships between diaspora associations and local civil society organizations. Municipalities like Lipjan, Prizren, and Gjilan have expressed strong support for the idea of establishing dedicated funding schemes to facilitate collaboration with diaspora-led initiatives. In Obiliq, for instance, diaspora members can access tailored investment consultations municipal economic development officers, who are responsible for managing local investment initiatives, while Vushtrri has created public-private partnerships where diaspora investors support cultural events in exchange for seasonal access to municipal facilities like winter market stalls.

### — 4.3. Educational and cultural exchange

In addition to administrative services, several municipalities have built meaningful relationships with the diaspora through educational exchanges, cultural events, and philanthropy. Lipjan showcased a good example in the past with its school exchange program, where students traveled to Germany for a two-week educational visit-funded entirely by the diaspora. Similarly, Lipjan's Literary Club regularly organizes events with diaspora poets, fostering deeper cultural connections.

The Municipality of Kamenica has nurtured particularly strong ties with its diaspora. According to the Director of Economic Development and Diaspora, many villages in the municipality have their own diaspora associations, which actively support local development. These associations regularly fund projects in their hometowns, such as renovating schools, supplying educational equipment, and supporting families in need. The diaspora from Busavatë, for instance, has led initiatives to improve school infrastructure and access to learning materials. Regular community meetings are organized by the municipality for diaspora representatives and business leaders. These engagements are not one-off events; rather, they are integrated into annual planning processes of the municipality, especially during the summer. The municipality has also worked to facilitate investment: in 2023, a municipal property was leased to a diaspora investor who launched an aluminum wrapping factory that exports to Switzerland. Kamenica publishes its available municipal assets annually on its website to attract more such ventures.<sup>19</sup>

One important remark made by officials from Lipjan is that without a clear strategy and engagement from both municipality and central institutions vice-versa the diaspora community organizations will reflect into a weakened link between diaspora and their homeland.

<sup>19</sup> The list of municipality's properties, available at: <https://kamenice.rks-gov.net/prokurimi/?tax=ankandet-publike>.

#### 4.4. Economic potential

According to the interviews with diaspora officials in municipalities, the interest from diaspora communities in investing in Kosovo continues to grow, particularly in sectors like construction, farming, gastronomy, and small manufacturing. Municipalities have started to document these expressions of interest through internal investment databases, though many still lack the systems to follow up effectively. The Municipality of Kamenica has addressed this gap by developing a comprehensive municipal economic profile, designed to support both diaspora engagement and central government initiatives like economic diplomacy. Recently, the municipality also produced a “white paper” for investors, a document summarizing local opportunities, infrastructure, and regulatory conditions. These steps also accommodate the early request from the Department of Economic Diplomacy and Diaspora Department in the Municipality of Kamenica, reflecting an emerging model of evidence-based investment promotion. Several municipalities organize regular events to encourage diaspora participation. From artisan fairs and local produce markets to flagship festivals like “Diaspora Days,” cultural celebration is a consistent feature of summer programming. In Ferizaj, these efforts are supplemented by a database of 70–80 diaspora-led businesses, which is used to organize biannual business networking events and to launch a Business-to-Business (B2B) initiative. In Gjilan, active efforts to attract investors have yielded a notable collaboration between an Albanian and a French company, currently operating in the Gjilan Business Park, a strategic location for investment. In Vushtrri, the cooperation with diaspora enabled the twinning of the city with several European cities which in turn resulted in Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) initiatives.

#### 4.5. Coordination challenges between local and central institutions

All focus-group participants from MFAD and municipalities agree that the lack of a direct line of communication between the MFAD and a dedicated official for diaspora, hinders all processes and creates more bureaucracy. This practice creates gaps in service provision and weakens the consistency and quality of diaspora engagement. The discussions also revealed significant structural, legal, financial, and operational barriers. Municipalities expressed that financial allocations for diaspora activities are insufficient and that coordination with the MFAD is often weak or left to informal communication. In other cases, such as Lipjan and Gjakova, it was noted that diaspora-related initiatives often lack strategic planning and are sometimes duplicated between the central and local levels due to unclear distribution of roles. The absence of well-defined coordination mechanisms means that municipalities and the ministry sometimes repeat efforts or miss opportunities for joint action.

The MFAD acknowledged these challenges and stressed that while the ministry promotes the idea that each municipality should have a designated diaspora officer, the responsibility for budgeting and planning lies primarily with the municipalities themselves. The ministry has already implemented programs, such as brain-gain fellowships aimed at encouraging the return of skilled professionals from abroad, and has signed various cooperation agreements with municipalities to support these initiatives. However, ministry representatives emphasized that effective diaspora engagement ultimately depends on the active involvement and initiative of local officials. Another key issue raised during the focus group was the limited capacity and training of municipal staff. Many officials do not have clear task descriptions for diaspora work and are often not adequately

compensated for their additional responsibilities. Furthermore, the absence of centralized reporting systems and a shared database hampers the ability to track diaspora needs and contributions in a structured way.<sup>20</sup>

Findings from both the focus group discussions and individual interviews with municipalities that are part of this needs assessment report underscore the need for capacity-building in diaspora engagement. Although some municipalities, such as Vushtrri, Kamenica, and Suhareka, have established dedicated diaspora directorates and demonstrated proactive practices, the majority of municipalities lack the institutional infrastructure, legal clarity, or human resource capacity to implement consistent and strategic diaspora-related services.

The focus group also called for stronger national coordination to protect cultural identity abroad. It was recommended that Albanian language education be supported through accessible online platforms, as many diaspora families face challenges in maintaining their language and cultural ties in their host countries. Additionally, participants highlighted the need for better dissemination of practical information, such as customs procedures, which should be made easily accessible through a centralized website to prevent misinformation or discriminatory practices.

Municipalities emphasized the importance of attracting diaspora investments, particularly through the development of industrial zones. There was a shared view that municipal roles in diaspora engagement should not be limited to service provision but should actively contribute to local economic development and the return of skilled professionals. However, participants repeatedly underlined that local authorities lack the financial resources to fully implement these ambitions without stronger budgetary support and cooperation from the ministry.

Moreover, these interviews underscored the need to incorporate gender-sensitive approaches within diaspora programming to ensure inclusive participation. Women are often not included in public discussions and their perspective is often overlooked. A gender-responsive approach to diaspora women involves actively addressing barriers such as limited access to economic opportunities, social services, and decision-making platforms, both abroad and upon return.

## 5. Digital Mapping

In the case of Kosovo, where the diaspora plays a critical role in social, cultural, and economic development, digital platforms provide opportunities for structured communication, investment facilitation, and cultural exchange. According to the data obtained through interviews and the focus group, the digital infrastructure for diaspora engagement in Kosovo lacks coherence. While there are platforms targeting specific needs, administrative, cultural, or economic, there is no unified strategy that consolidates these services, where the absence of interoperability of platforms reduces the efficiency of outreach and undermines the potential for diaspora integration. Moreover, current systems do not leverage analytics for understanding diaspora demographics, engagement trends, or investment behavior. This limits evidence-based policymaking.

Kosovo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD) has spearheaded several initiatives to enhance diaspora relations through digital solutions such as "Shijo Kosovën", "Ulpiana forum" and "Made in Kosova". In addition to that, MFAD is intending to develop the e-Diaspora platform, an early version of

<sup>20</sup> The diaspora official from the municipality of Suhareka underlined the consequences of the merging of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Diaspora into one Ministry. Take the example of other ministries such as the Ministry of Education, where the Education Directorate reports and is in close cooperation with the central level.

which served only for registering Kosovo diaspora during census, envisioned as a centralized tool for organizational mapping and engagement planning. According to representatives of MFAD, the project is coordinated in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister, the cabinet of Deputy Minister of MFAD, and the Agency for Information Society (AIS), which will oversee technical implementation. A concept document was initiated in 2024, and a budget of €15,000 has been allocated for the platform's development by MFAD for the second half of 2025. To move forward, MFAD needs to contract a developer or organization to implement the platform. Key features under consideration include detailed municipal profiles, a database of diaspora organizations, and strategic planning. The platform aims to improve coordination, visibility, and support for diaspora initiatives, contributing to a more connected and informed Kosovar diaspora community.

There are, however, some platforms managed by different institutions through which the Kosovo diaspora receives certain services. For instance, e-Kosova provides administrative services such as document issuance and apostille appointments for citizens abroad. Similarly, "Made in-Kosova" and KIESA address economic interests by offering information on investment procedures, fiscal incentives, and sector-specific opportunities. Other platforms like Shijo Kosovën and Ulpiana Forum target cultural diplomacy and youth engagement, offering spaces for events, training, and civil society collaboration. However, the functionality and depth of these platforms vary significantly. Some, such as Made in-Kosova, provide only superficial information, indicating a lack of regular updates and strategic content management. Moreover, these platforms operate independently, resulting in fragmentation rather than an integrated digital experience.

Besides lack of interoperability between existing platforms, several issues were identified through this mapping. Most platforms function as static information repositories rather than interactive tools enabling real-time communication, feedback, or networking, and do not provide crucial information or updates that would encourage diaspora economic and cultural engagement. These platforms are also only available in the official languages in Kosovo, Albanian and Serbian.

## — 5.1. Municipalities outreach channels

Kosovo's 38 municipalities maintain an online presence primarily through official Facebook pages, which have become the dominant communication tool for sharing local news, public announcements, and event updates. While these channels are effective for engaging residents within the municipality, their relevance to the diaspora is limited. Content rarely targets diaspora communities explicitly, such as updates on investment opportunities, property-related information, or cultural activities abroad. Instead, posts typically focus on local administrative matters or community events, which may not align with the interests of Kosovars living overseas.

In addition to official pages, there are numerous informal Facebook groups created by the communities abroad. These groups often function as self-organized networks where diaspora members exchange information about hometown developments, fundraising campaigns, and cultural events. However, these groups operate independently of municipal administrations, resulting in a lack of official representation and coordination. This gap highlights an opportunity for municipalities to establish formal digital engagement strategies, integrating official communication with existing community networks and leveraging social media to share diaspora-focused content.

Some municipalities have already signed contracts to engage the local news portals for outreach purposes. These agreements foresee that all important information in regards to developments in specific municipalities are made public, and higher outreach is secured. This indeed has proved to be a good strategy according to local officials as the local news portals do have followers from the diaspora community specific to the municipality.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

GAP Institute recommends a comprehensive, coordinated approach to strengthening diaspora engagement in Kosovo, with actions needed across municipal structures, national institutions, and digital platforms.

- Municipalities should establish dedicated diaspora officer positions with clear mandates, supported by revised Ministry of Finance hiring regulations that allow flexible creation and funding of such roles. Staff capacity should be strengthened through continuous legal, digital, planning, and gender-responsive training, as well as cross-directorate learning.
- Diaspora services should be institutionalized year-round, moving beyond seasonal support, and expanded from administrative tasks to include investment facilitation, tourism promotion, and business engagement.
- Municipalities should develop long-term diaspora engagement strategies aligned with national frameworks, establish permanent dialogue structures (e.g., diaspora councils/forums), and improve coordination with MFAD through joint working groups and shared planning platforms.
- Municipalities should enhance visibility of investment opportunities through online portals, investor packages, interactive maps, and "diaspora corners" linked to a national platform. A centralized national diaspora database should also be created and made accessible to municipalities for coordination and service delivery.
- Local diaspora associations should be encouraged and integrated into development efforts, while international partnerships and city-twinning initiatives are expanded to mobilize diaspora networks and attract FDI.
- Furthermore, the Diaspora Collegium within the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKK) should be reactivated as a functional mechanism for inter-municipal cooperation, enabling municipal diaspora officers to exchange best practices, harmonize institutional approaches, and contribute to horizontal coordination among municipalities, with the aim of increasing the engagement of the diaspora at the local level.
- Municipal grant schemes should support joint diaspora-CSO initiatives, including programs for youth and women in leadership, education, and entrepreneurship. "Brain return" initiatives should offer fellowships, placements, and skills-matching for returning professionals, with gender-sensitive approaches mainstreamed across all policies and programs to ensure targeted support for returning diaspora women.
- A unified, user-friendly system should integrate national services with municipal outreach. e-Diaspora should serve as the primary portal connecting platforms such as e-Kosova, KIESA, and municipal digital pages, supported by Single Sign-On (SSO) for accessing services ranging from document requests to investment information and event registration.
- To ensure coherence, municipalities should follow uniform content guidelines and provide bilingual materials (Albanian and English, and where relevant Serbian, German, or Turkish). The platform should integrate municipal social media pages through automated feeds and formalize links with informal diaspora Facebook groups.

## Annexes

**Table 1.** Municipal diaspora services and structures

Does the municipality have:	A full-time diaspora officer?	A diaspora directorate?	A database of diaspora (led) businesses?	Longer shifts or extra counters during diaspora visits on summer?	An outreach mechanism, through which it informs the diaspora regarding municipal works, plans, public hearings, etc?	Has a fast-track property registration for diaspora?
Gjilan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Information
Vushtrri	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (Two summer service counters)	Yes	No Information
Kamenica	Yes	A diaspora sector	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Suhareka	No (part-time only)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Lipjan	No (part-time only)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Ferizaj	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Prizren	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Podujeva	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Obiliq	No	No	No Information	No Information	Yes	No
Dragash	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

Source: Stakeholder interviews

**Table 2.** Digital platforms related to Kosovo and diaspora engagement

No.	Platform	Description	Ownership	Diaspora-related services
1	e-Kosova <a href="https://ekosova.rks-gov.net/">https://ekosova.rks-gov.net/</a>	A platform for providing administrative services, primarily for obtaining official documents.	Ministry of Internal Affairs	The platform now includes an appointment service for apostille certification.
2	Made in-Kosova <a href="https://made-in-kosova.net/">https://made-in-kosova.net/</a>	Economic information platform.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD)	Offers general information about investing in Kosovo, including: applicable laws for business registration; guidance on procedures for starting a business; fiscal incentives; licensing requirements; and information on economic zones. Note: The platform needs significant updates as it currently provides very basic information.

3	e-Diaspora	A digital platform under development, intended for diaspora registration during ReKos and future engagement.	MFAD	Was used for diaspora registration and mapping during the census.
4	KIESA <a href="https://kiesa.rks-gov.net/page.aspx?id=1,110">https://kiesa.rks-gov.net/page.aspx?id=1,110</a>	Platform for supporting investments and exports from and to Kosovo.	Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade (MINT)	In terms of local development and engagement of diaspora in local investments, it provides basic information on "doing business" opportunities in Kosovo, specifying priority sectors. It also offers detailed information on potential investment in 14 municipalities.
5	Platforma Digjitale <a href="https://www.platformadigjitale.com/">https://www.platformadigjitale.com/</a>	Digital platform for public participation, enabling interactive and transparent communication between citizens and municipal officials.	OSCE (Donor)	Allows citizens (including diaspora) to submit proposals, register ideas or recommendations for their neighborhood/municipality; enables complaints regarding municipal services; municipal officials respond directly to posted requests.
6	Diaspora Investment Window <a href="https://fondikgk.org/dritarja-diaspores/">https://fondikgk.org/dritarja-diaspores/</a>	A platform dedicated to diaspora investors, facilitating financial support through banking instruments.	Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund (KCGF)	Diaspora investors planning to establish or co-invest in new businesses (less than 36 months old) can access guaranteed loans of up to 80% of the amount, up to €3 million, with a repayment period of up to 84 months. Requirements: Kosovar origin, living abroad for more than 3 years. Application through commercial banks.
7	7.1. Kosovo Chamber of Commerce <a href="https://www.oek-kcc.org/">https://www.oek-kcc.org/</a>	Chamber with membership for local and foreign businesses operating in Kosovo.	Kosovo Chamber of Commerce	Offers administrative and operational support for businesses, investment information, B2B networking, events, and access to a database of retired German experts for affordable business development support.



**Table 3.** wPlatforms related to cultural and diplomatic activities

No.	Platform	Description	Ownership	Diaspora-related services
1	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) <a href="https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,114">https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,114</a> <a href="https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,114">https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,114</a>	Among others, it provides public funding for cultural, sports and youth activities.	MCYS	It issues annual open calls for funding for diaspora communities for both individuals and groups of people organized as NGOs. The purpose of these calls is to engage diaspora in all fields of interests such as culture, youth and sports.
2	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD) <a href="https://mfa-ks.net/shpallje-dhe-vendime/">https://mfa-ks.net/shpallje-dhe-vendime/</a>	Among others, it provides public funding for diaspora related activities	MFAD	It issues three annual calls for up to 900 thousand EUR in support of activities related to the diaspora community. Only NGOs can apply by submitting project proposals for activities which can last for up to one year.
3	Shijo Kosovën <a href="https://shijokosoven.com/">https://shijokosoven.com/</a>	Information platform about diaspora activities organized by MFAD and civil society.	MFAD	Provides information on youth and cultural initiatives funded or co-funded by MFAD; highlights major cultural or entertainment events in Kosovo; and lists diaspora-focused activities organized in cooperation with municipalities (currently only for a few municipalities).
4	Ulpiana Forum <a href="https://ulpianaforum.org/">https://ulpianaforum.org/</a>	A forum leveraging diplomatic and development capacities of states and partners to strengthen diaspora engagement.	MFAD	Serves as a multi-stakeholder platform that promotes dialogue on diaspora impact and strategically enhances partnerships in this essential field.
5	Citizen Diplomacy Fellowship (CDF) <a href="https://cdfellowship.com/">https://cdfellowship.com/</a>	An initiative that brings together young professionals from the diaspora, motivating them to play a significant role for the development of Kosova	MFAD	Issued a call for application to start a fellowship in August 2024 till June 2025 for fellows to contribute to the MFAD and other ministries of the Government of Kosovo

6	GIZ <a href="https://diaspora2030.de/en/partner-countries/kosovo">https://diaspora2030.de/en/partner-countries/kosovo</a>	Supports diaspora experts, organisations, and entrepreneurs across 14 partner countries (Kosovo is one of the partners)	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)	Assists members of the diaspora in their efforts to promote sustainable development in their countries of origin
7	The Diaspora Professional Engagement Platform (EDP) <a href="https://diasporaprofessionals.germin.org/#">https://diasporaprofessionals.germin.org/#</a>	Facilitates the connection of diaspora professionals with institutions, organizations, and businesses in Kosovo	GERMIN	Open calls to bring skills and knowledge back to Kosovo and Albania, helping to transfer valuable know-how where it's needed most.





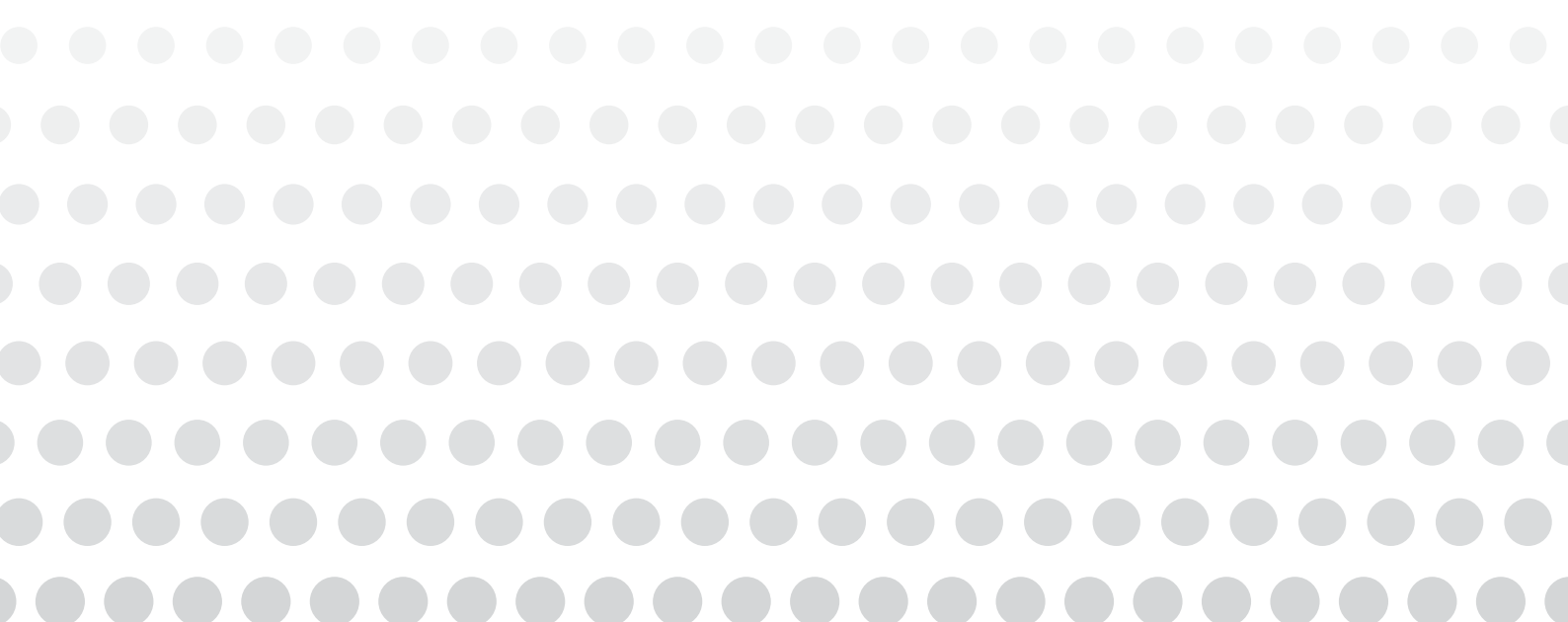
GAP Institute is a Think Tank established in October 2007 in Kosovo. GAP's main goal is to attract professionals to create an environment of professional development and research, as seen in similar institutions in Western countries. This also provides Kosovars with opportunities to research, develop and implement projects in order to advance the Kosovo society. Priority for this Institute is the mobilization of professionals to address the country's economic, political and social challenges. GAP's main goals are to fill the gaps between government and citizens, and between problems and solutions.

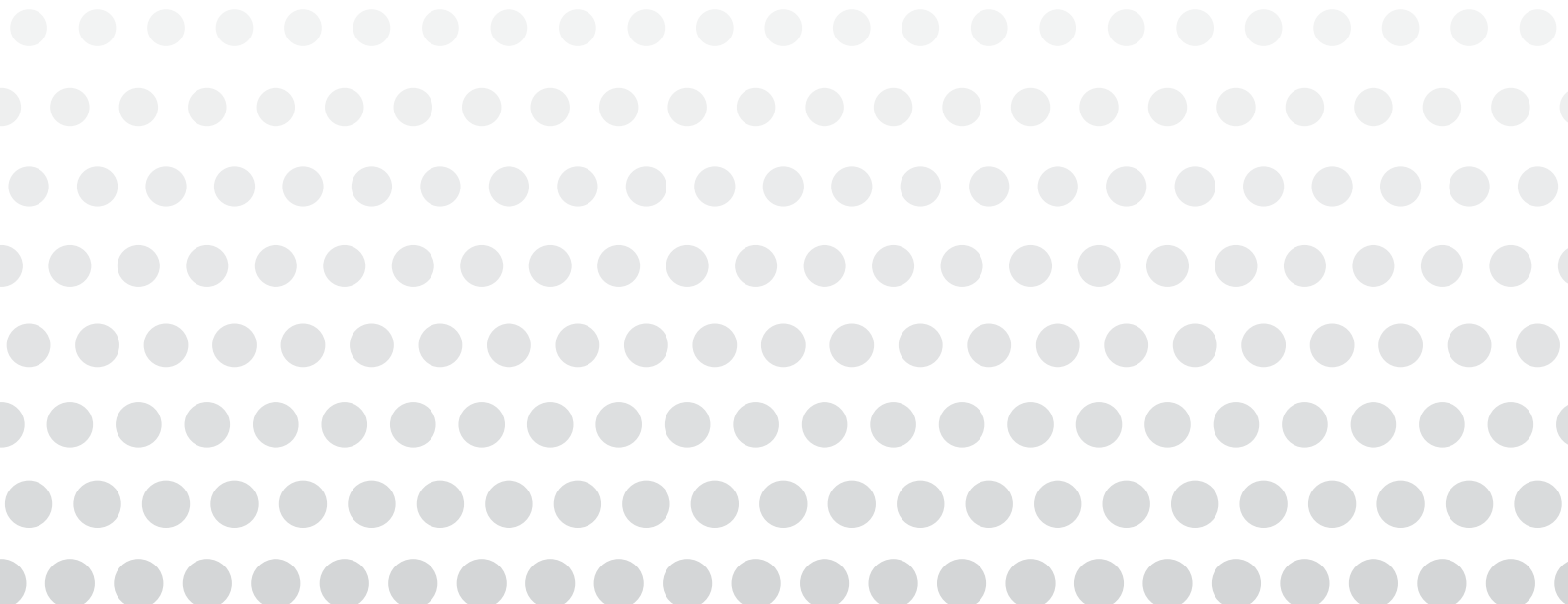
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**Strengthening the capacities  
of municipalities for diaspora  
engagement in Kosovo**