



CELEBRATING **17** YEARS OF KCSS:

Reflections and Future Aspirations



CONTENTS

<u>A Statement from FLORIAN QEHAJA, Co-Founder of KCSS</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Insights and Reflections from Dr. RAMADAN ILAZI</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>Promotion of KCSS Programmes</u>	<u>B</u>
<u>Insights and Reflections from Executive Director, MENTOR VRAJOLLI</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Statement from TEUTA AVDIMETAJ, Chairperson of the KCSS Advisory Board</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>Promotion of KCSS Tools & Platforms</u>	<u>C</u>
<u>Insights and Reflections from TRINGA NAKA</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>Insights and reflections from key staff of KCSS</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>Online Presence</u>	<u>D</u>

KCSS AT 17:

A Statement from **FLORIAN QEHAJA,** CO-FOUNDER OF KCSS

It is with profound honour that I reflect on the unique journey of KCSS's development. As the Centre marks its 17th anniversary, I vividly remember the moment when the idea to establish KCSS as a specialised think tank on security first emerged. It was a time when I, along with a few fellow colleagues, recognised the need to contribute to research, advocacy, and awareness-raising in the security sector.

The timing—April 17, 2008—coincided with the birth of the Republic of Kosovo, a moment that called for, among many other things, the creation of a specialised institution to monitor and support the development of the emerging security and defence sectors. Back then, many still believed that security was the sole domain of the state. Others thought it was the responsibility of individuals, particularly those with ties to the war. Despite these views, we succeeded in establishing the nucleus of a research centre that would go on to provide a tangible and lasting contribution—well beyond the original expectations.

KCSS quickly evolved into a reliable and influential actor, collaborating with key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. It became a leading reference point for security analysis while advocating for various processes that ultimately benefited the people of Kosovo.

Over the years, it joined regional consortia that collectively contributed to security sector reform and development.

Dozens of former KCSS researchers and staff have gone on to become respected independent analysts, political leaders, Members of Parliament, and diplomats. Each of them continues to contribute, in their own way, to society and to the shared values of security, the rule of law, and democracy—principles on which KCSS was founded.

With hundreds of research publications and analyses, along with active participation in countless conferences and reform processes, KCSS has continued to serve as an unrivalled research centre in the field of security. In the absence of many empirical academic works in this field, KCSS remains a vital resource for students conducting research and projects on security-related topics.

As one of KCSS's founding members, I express my deepest gratitude to the many former and current staff members who have helped make KCSS a resilient, professional, and impactful platform. I am also thankful to our donors and partners for their continued financial support. Lastly, I wish to especially commend the Executive Director, Mentor Vrajolli, whose dedication in recent years has been instrumental in keeping KCSS



Florian Qehaja
Co-Founder of KCSS

KCSS AT 17:

Insights and Reflections from **MENTOR VRAJOLLI**

Executive Director

While the work and contribution of the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) is well known to its audience, not many are familiar with the history and growth of the organization. On the occasion of the 17th anniversary of KCSS, Executive Director Mentor Vrajolli provides a retrospective interview, reflecting on the initial vision of the organization, dedicated efforts and key accomplishments of the organization. Mentor Vrajolli, aside from being the leader of the organization, is also KCSS's longest-serving staffer, having started working on the organization back in 2008 when the organization had been just established. Now, reflecting on the 17th anniversary, he says with pride that he is very much honored by the work done and progress achieved by the organization. He also notes that although not nostalgic in nature, these anniversaries unavoidably evoke nostalgia for those early days while also elaborating the noble mission that the organization set for itself from the outset, the belief that staff had on it, the growth of ambitions, the consolidation of its structure, collaboration with partners, gratefulness for the support from the donors and about the goal and ambitions that the organization sets for the future.

Can you provide an overview of the early days of the KCSS, its mission, initial team, and motivations?

"When KCSS started back in 2008, we were a very young but, I would say, talented, ambitious but motivated team. However, our collective synergy quickly fostered a strong belief in the organization's mission. Life experiences played an important role in us building rapidly the maturity required for the role that we undertook. We all had vivid memories of the 1990s, having witnessed the inhuman brutality of the Serbian security forces instrumentalized

by the Milosevic regime against the Kosovo majority population, which led to a devastating war and carving long-lasting scars in the memories of the Kosovo society. Our mission as new members of a civil society organization and as very young policy researchers of a think tank was clear: Kosovo's security-building would be nothing like that. Thus, our instant goal was to ensure that the consolidation of Kosovo's security sector would be based on contemporary democratic principles—including accountability, transparency, diversity, human rights, and democratic oversight—and aligned with Euro-Atlantic integration processes."



Mr. Mentor Vrajolli
Executive Director



For those unfamiliar KCSS officially began its work on 17th April 2008, exactly two Months after Kosovo became an independent state. This transition meant that security institutions, such as the Kosovo Police, which had previously been governed by the UNMIK administration, would gradually come under the management of Kosovo authorities. Additionally, the Kosovo Protection Corps was to be dissolved and replaced by the Kosovo Security Force, which was projected to become the new defense force of Kosovo following an initial five-year supervised civilian mission. Moreover, oversight of the entire Kosovo security sector would progressively transfer to newly established Kosovo institutions, which were inexperienced compared to their counterparts in established states. Hence, the enhancement of the security sector oversight through research-based civil society organizations such as KCSS has been extremely timely from the point of view of the consolidation of the Kosovo Security Sector.

“However, aspirations that we built at KCSS in those extended further beyond only overseeing the process of consolidation of Kosovo’s newly established security sector. From the beginning, we fiercely advocated for a broader understanding of the security sector by Kosovo’s new state institutions, going beyond traditional hard power perspectives. Installing the human security perspective among the security sector-related targeted audience has been the core priority of our organization that we pushed forward. We persistently worked hard in raising awareness on various security issues such as promoting peacebuilding, internal ethnic cohesion, and equal representation, particularly in Kosovo’s security institutions, preventing religious-based extremism, fostering

bilateral and regional cooperation, and promoting women, peace and security agenda. Furthermore, promotion cooperation in the rule of law and peacebuilding, both domestically and regionally, has been a core part of our mission. This includes also adhering to EU integration criteria with a focus on Chapters 23, 24, and later on chapter 35 of the EU Acquis as well as promotion of NATO integration-aspirations and related reforms.

Additionally, our goal has been to become a vocal voice that would actively advocate for switching from a retroactive approach to a preventive one when it comes to dealing with the safety and security threats that Kosovo and Western Balkans citizens face. This implies investments in building social cohesion, countering foreign malicious influences, strengthening disaster management mechanisms, implementing protection of critical infrastructure measures, building cyber security resilience, and safeguarding personal data.

Can you explain what kind of values the KCSS brought to Kosovo society and to the overall security sector?

It should be noted that when KCSS was founded, we were the sole aspiring security think tank in Kosovo. Before KCSS, there were mainly NGOs and research organizations that were not specialized or were focused on other sectors, rarely addressing security issues, if at all. Even now, Kosovo institutions generally lack robust research mechanisms or capabilities. Due to this gap, it has largely been our responsibility to identify the challenges within the security sector and communicate them to relevant stakeholders. Indeed, until recently and even currently, KCSS has been at the forefront of addressing all security sector challenges. We are talking here about

more than 250 research reports published by KCSS throughout these 17 years, almost each of which have kept such reputation.

Thus, for all these years KCSS’s research publications have been regarded as among the only qualitative sources in disposal of Kosovo’s security sector. Moreover, KCSS’s specialization is a rare phenomenon in the region. KCSS is one of the few organizations in the Balkans that is widely recognized for maintaining its specialization and establishing itself as a credible non-governmental entity in this sensitive sector.

How KCSS’s structure grown throughout the years?

Of course, at the early start of the KCSS, the structure of the organization was small and simple. Nevertheless, the growth of the organization took place much rapidly than we anticipated. As of 2010, KCSS already had started the process of establishing thematic programmes. The goal with the thematic programmes was to ensure that organization does not operate solely on the project based but ensures that core topics which fall within the mission of the organization are covered regardless if there are projects or not.

The first program that KCSS established were: Good Governance, Integrity and Rule of Law in the Security Sector; and Foreign Policy and Regional Cooperation Programme. Both programmes have been considerably holistic, tackling similar issues but varying from the geographic perspectives.

By 2012 the KCSS the established the Kosovo Security Barometer (KSB) which

was a methodological programme. The main instrument of this programme was Kosovo Security Barometer Survey which aimed to measure citizens' perception on security sector holistically. This enabled KCSS to create a greater set of its own research data and cover wider range of topic.

In 2013 the KCSS established the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Programme now known as the Resilient Community Building Programme. The goal of this programme was to analyse the social cohesion in Kosovo, especially after a number of Kosovo citizens were reported to have joined the foreign conflicts, and religious extremism started to become a major topic both globally and in Kosovo. However, from the beginning, the KCSS's intention with this programme was not to limit only on the observing single source of extremism. Thus, alongside tackling the Muslim based extremism, which was in growing trends back then, the KCSS have advocated actively when it comes to tackling other sources of extremism such the one deriving from ethnonationalism.

As of 2016, the KCSS established two thematic programmes: Gender Peace and Security (GPS Programme) and Emerging Threats Programme. The GPS Programme was initiated due to increased efforts by the KCSS to advance the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (UN Resolution 1325) in Kosovo and beyond. This programme has two primary objectives: 1) to oversee mechanisms responsible for combating gender-based violence, which is a serious concern in our region; and 2) to advocate for the enhanced participation of women in the security sector, thereby transforming their societal role from victims to active security actors. Conversely, the Emerging Threats Programme aims to raise awareness among institutional actors and the general public about new threats emerging from global transformations, to which Kosovo's civil society cannot remain immune. Specifically, the programme focuses on increasing awareness regarding the vulnerability of critical infrastructure,

cyberthreats, privacy breaches, and the impact of global weather changes on natural disasters such as wildfires, floods, and droughts, which have become increasingly evident in Kosovo over the past years.

As of 2022, we have been developing a new programme specifically centered on Peacebuilding. Although KCSS has addressed peacebuilding topics through other programmes since its inception, its work in this area has significantly increased over the past five years. This growth is attributable to the regressed political environment in the Western Balkans, characterized by the rise of more nationalist and authoritarian governments, which threaten the peacebuilding efforts made by the region for decades.

How influential the KCSS have been through the years in Kosovo and beyond?

The Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS) has been a cornerstone in Kosovo's security landscape since its establishment. From the very beginning, KCSS's influence has been profound, driven by a culture of cooperation developed through extensive interaction with the international community present in Kosovo. This collaborative environment, coupled with the founders' esteemed status in the security sector, enabled KCSS to be actively involved in key processes.

KCSS's contributions have been integral to the drafting of crucial legislation and national strategies. For instance, former Director Mr. Florian Qehaja played a significant role in the working group for Kosovo's first national security strategy in 2010. This engagement set the stage for KCSS's continued involvement in shaping most of the security and rule of law legislations and national strategies over the years. In particular, KCSS has been the sole organization in the region dedicated to promoting constructive policies for the

prevention of violent extremism (PVE) within and beyond Kosovo. Their pivotal role in drafting and implementing the National Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism highlights their influence.

Moreover, KCSS has been instrumental in promoting good governance within the security sector. The Security Barometer, conducted by KCSS, has become a respected tool among Kosovo's security institutions, encouraging them to improve their ratings. KCSS's proactive stance extends to peacebuilding and fostering social cohesion in Kosovo society. They have been staunch advocates for gender and ethnic representation in security institutions from the outset. Additionally, the KCSS have been the most active voice when it comes to inviting the security actors from Kosovo and beyond to proactively track the emerging threats. Most notably, the KCSS have been almost the only organization in the region who have actively called institutions to enhance the resilience on disaster management, critical infrastructure, cybersecurity and data protection.

Additionally, KCSS has led efforts to promote regional cooperation, focusing on security, rule of law, and peacebuilding. Their comprehensive approach and sustained engagement have solidified their status as a key player in Kosovo's security sector and beyond. Due to that, but also due to its thematic consistency, rigorous research and active advocacy, the KCSS have gradually grown to become one of the most recognized and respectable organizations in the Balkans and beyond.

Can you tell a difficult episode that the KCSS have faced over the past 17 years?

The beginning of the organization was a challenging pathway. For many in the security sector, it was unimaginable for a non-governmental organization to



be involved in this field. Consequently, there were dubious attitudes from those questioning our presence in this sector at the start of the event. As we began to display our work, such opinions, particularly among representatives of public institutions, rapidly diminished.

For instance, I recall an episode when we produced a report on the state of the private security sector in Kosovo in 2009. We conducted thorough research, focusing on the treatment of employees in this sector, where collecting qualitative and quantitative data was not the biggest challenge. However, the real challenges arose during the publication event, especially from companies that did not participate in the research and were not mentioned in it. These companies felt that the findings reflected their situation and pressured us to withdraw the publication, including direct phone calls threatening us with force if we did not comply. We resisted such pressure because the report addressed the harsh treatment of more than 7000 employees working in the sector at that time.

Between 2016-2019, the KCSS participated in a substantial regional project on this topic. We noticed a significant change in the atmosphere of the sector's attitude towards us as a civil society organization. Previously reticent private security companies were now willing to discuss the same findings, noting that the situation had remained relatively unchanged. These companies recognized that earning through labor abuse was not a sustainable approach for the sector. They expressed interest in equal treatment from institutions for all private companies, which was crucial for fair competition. They viewed KCSS as a partner capable of providing fair assessments and addressing favoritism by public institutions towards companies connected to ruling parties that controlled the private security service market in the public sector.

Speaking of partnerships, the KCSS seem to be a highly networked organization. How did you come to that?

The Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS) has been influential since its inception in 2008, initiating collaboration with renowned organizations like DCAF Geneva, which promotes civil society cooperation in the security sector. This collaboration led to the establishment of the Balkans Security Platform, involving organizations from each Western Balkans country, with KCSS as a key partner. At the time of KCSS's establishment, security think-tanks were rare, particularly in Kosovo where none existed. In the Western Balkans, the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) was the only recognizable organization, and through the Balkans Security Platform, it became one of KCSS's closest regional partners. While most organizations in the region typically had only a department or staff dedicated to security, KCSS's dynamic approach attracted various stakeholders domestically, regionally, and internationally.

By 2011, KCSS became a member of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, a leading Brussels-based network of organizations involved in EU peacebuilding and security policies. This membership enabled KCSS to expand its connections with European organizations sharing similar interests. By 2015, KCSS gained regional and global recognition for its expertise in preventing violent extremism in Kosovo and the Western Balkans. Notably, KCSS's Director was invited to the Obama Summit in early 2015, and KCSS also became a member of the "Resolved Network" run by the US Institute for Peace. These recognitions at the policymaking and networking levels led to increased offers to join major consortiums. Starting in 2016, KCSS became a member of its first Horizon 2020 Consortiums. Subsequently, KCSS received numerous invitations to join other consortiums.

Since then, KCSS has participated in 15 Horizon 2020, International Security Fund (ISF) Police, CERV, and Horizon Europe winning consortiums. These consortiums involve over 250 prominent universities, think tanks, law enforcement agencies, and consulting firms. In many of these consortiums, KCSS played a leading role, managing key packages and receiving accolades for its exceptional implementation work.

Despite its active involvement in European consortiums, KCSS remained focused on domestic and regional issues in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. Its primary goal is to advocate strengthening democratic values, enhancing security cooperation, and building joint resilience against regional threats.

What about the donors, how well connected KCSS have been with them?

Overall, funding for civil society organizations working on the security sector is relatively limited. This scarcity of resources is likely a key factor behind the small number of specialized organizations in the region. Consequently, we anticipate that securing adequate funding will continue to be a challenge. Nevertheless, our commitment to engaging civil society in overseeing the security sector stems from a profound need to prevent arbitrary actions by security institutions.

As Kosovans, having survived the 1990s, we possess vivid memories of the abuses perpetrated by Milosevic's regime, where political power was wielded to arbitrarily control security institutions, inflicting considerable pain on our society. Thus, we firmly believe in the significance of our mission. Fortunately, our efforts have been recognized by several important donors who have generously supported KCSS.

Additionally, our participation in civil society cooperation initiatives within this sector has provided both diverse funding

streams and opportunities for knowledge exchange from the outset. Prominent among our loyal supporters over the years are the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Open Society Foundation, and the Balkan Trust for Democracy. Other notable supporters include the Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), the U.S. Embassy in Kosovo, the Embassy of the Netherlands, and the German Embassy in Kosovo.

Since 2016, KCSS has actively engaged in European consortiums, making EU funding a crucial financial resource for our organization.

Finally, as a concluding question which are aspirations of the KCSS for the future?

As the Executive Director of KCSS, I can say that aspirations of our organization for the future are deeply rooted in our unwavering commitment to ensuring the security sector serves

the citizens, building a resilient society from the threats posed and continue its efforts when it comes to internal and regional peacebuilding. We aim to continue our dynamic work, remaining visionary, innovative, and persistent in our efforts. Moving forward, KCSS will strengthen its role as a pivotal force in promoting peace, security, and good governance in Kosovo, the Western Balkans, and beyond. By building on our achievements, we will address emerging security challenges with the same dedication and passion that has defined us from the beginning. Our mission is to foster a security environment where democratic values flourish, security cooperation is enhanced, and regional resilience is built against threats. We are determined to remain a rational, research-based voice, advocating for human security principles, and actively promoting security sector reform through oversight, research, advocacy, and capacity-building. Together with our dedicated team and supportive partners, KCSS will continue to make significant strides in advancing our mission, ensuring that the security sector is always in the service of the citizens.



KCSS AT 17: Insights and Reflections from **TRINGA NAKA**, Head of Operations

My journey with KCSS began in 2014, when I joined the organization as a young intern, eager to learn and ready to contribute. From the very beginning, I sensed that KCSS was more than just an organization—it was a community. What started as a short-term opportunity quickly became a calling that has shaped my professional path and personal growth.

Since joining KCSS, I've had the privilege of growing through several roles—from intern to Communications Officer, then Office Manager, and now Head of Operations. Each stage of this journey has deepened my connection to the organization and strengthened my belief in the impact of purpose-driven leadership. As a woman navigating and advancing through leadership roles, I've come to appreciate the importance of representation and the value of creating inclusive spaces where diverse voices—especially those of women—are heard, respected, and empowered.

What I love most about KCSS is its unwavering commitment to people. Whether it's empowering communities, supporting colleagues, or collaborating with partners, there's a shared sense of responsibility to do good—and to do it well. Our core values of integrity, collaboration, service, and empowerment are not just guiding principles; they are

lived experiences here every day.

One of my proudest contributions has been leading efforts to streamline our operations, build resilient systems, and foster a culture of collaboration across departments. I've also been fortunate to mentor emerging leaders—something that brings me immense joy and hope for the future.

One project that stands out in my memory is the international conference that brought together nearly 300 participants from diverse backgrounds from the region and beyond. It was a powerful reminder that the most impactful solutions emerge when we create space for varied voices, listen with intention, and lead with boldness and empathy.

For over a decade, KCSS has been more than a workplace—it has been a training ground for leadership, resilience, and purpose. It has challenged me to grow, inspired me to lead, and given me the confidence to dream bigger—for myself and for the communities we serve.

As I look to the future, I see KCSS not just maintaining its impact but multiplying it. I believe we are uniquely positioned to lead transformative change—locally, regionally, and beyond. The best is yet to come, and I'm honored to be part of this incredible journey.



Tringa Naka

Head of Operations

KCSS AT 17:

Insights and Reflections from **DR. RAMADAN ILAZI,** Head of Research

1. Head of Research, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), On the 17th Anniversary of KCSS?

The establishment of the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) coincided with a historical moment in Kosovo's history—when the country declared independence and began consolidating its statehood. It was also a time of transformation, with Kosovo embarking on reforms to improve and professionalize its security institutions. Since its founding, KCSS has been at the forefront of producing high-quality, policy-relevant research that serves both public interest and institutional development. KCSS was among the pioneers in researching security sector reform, civilian oversight of the security sector, and radicalization and violent extremism. These efforts helped shape not only policy responses but also public understanding of these challenges. Importantly, the organization was established by a group of professionals with backgrounds in security and policy, and I was always aware of KCSS's meaningful impact and credibility within the field.

2. When and how did you join KCSS?

My journey with KCSS began while I was pursuing my PhD studies in Ireland. At

that time, the then-Executive Director, Florian, approached me with the idea of joining the team for a new Horizon-funded project that KCSS was about to launch. That project turned out to be the PAVE Project—a significant initiative that became my entry point into the organization. Through PAVE, I coordinated research across the Western Balkans and MENA regions. One of our key contributions was introducing the concept of ethno-political radicalization into public discourse in Kosovo and the region, helping to reframe how we understand threats to peace and security. The experience was both professionally enriching and important for KCSS. It also paved the way for our current work on the SMIDGE Project, led by De Montfort University and the University of Copenhagen—another Horizon-funded initiative in which I'm currently engaged.

3. What does your role as Head of Research entail?

My role as Head of Research has four key parts. First, I support and mentor colleagues through the research process, helping to maintain a high standard of ethics and analytical rigor. Second, I work as team leader and contribute directly to research projects—especially those funded through Horizon Europe or other research projects. Third, I work to anticipate and introduce emerging research themes that can inform public



Dr. Ramadan Ilazi

Head of Research,



discourse and policy in Kosovo and the Western Balkans—on issues ranging from extremism to foreign influence and peacebuilding. Lastly, I contribute to the organization’s fundraising and project development. KCSS is an inspiring place to work—intellectually stimulating, grounded in debate, and enriched by a diversity of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives.

4. What values of KCSS do you personally admire the most?

One value that stands out to me is our unwavering commitment to the public good. KCSS exists not only to generate knowledge, but to help shape a more democratic, and more inclusive future for Kosovo and the region. We work to contribute to regional security cooperation in the Western Balkans and to support Kosovo’s path as a democratic, civic state—one that embraces its ethnic and cultural diversity. We aim to foster a sense of shared regional responsibility, particularly when it comes to peace and security. Our work is also deeply rooted in the long-term aspirations of Kosovar society: to be a full member of the EU and NATO. That alignment between vision and values is what gives our work coherence and purpose.

5. Which projects have been most meaningful to you during your time at KCSS?

One value that stands out to me is our unwavering commitment to the public good. KCSS exists not only to generate knowledge, but to help shape a more democratic, and more inclusive future for Kosovo and the region. We work to contribute to regional security cooperation in the Western Balkans and to support Kosovo’s path as a democratic, civic state—one that embraces its ethnic and cultural diversity. We aim to foster a sense of shared regional responsibility, particularly when it comes to peace and security. Our work is also deeply rooted in the long-term aspirations of Kosovar society: to be a full member of the EU and NATO. That alignment between vision and values is what gives our work coherence and purpose.

Final Thoughts

Celebrating the 17th anniversary of KCSS is a moment of reflection, not only on how far we’ve come, but also on the responsibilities that lie ahead. Our mission remains clear: to inform policy through evidence, foster inclusive public discourse, and contribute to a more peaceful and democratic region and country. Personally, it is a privilege to be part of an institution that values integrity, critical thinking, and cooperation—and I look forward to continuing this journey with my exceptional colleagues at KCSS.

KCSS AT 17:

Statement from **TEUTA AVDIMETAJ,** Chairperson of the KCSS Advisory Board

My first contact with KCSS was as a student, at a time when online resources on security-related topics in Kosovo were scarce. KCSS stood out as a reliable, evidence-based source that filled a critical gap in the field. I later had the privilege to join KCSS as a researcher, and more recently as a member of the Advisory Board.

KCSS has consistently demonstrated a remarkable ability to read the security landscape with both sensitivity and precision—addressing some of the most critical and often overlooked issues in real time. A clear example of this is its pioneering work in the field of deradicalization and the prevention of violent extremism, where it has led efforts that extend well beyond Kosovo's borders.

KCSS continues to advance local expertise

by empowering young professionals and cultivating much-needed talent in research and security analysis. Through its numerous partnerships, KCSS ensures that Kosovo's perspectives and experiences are included in global discussions on peace, security, and the strengthening of institutions based on democratic principles.



Teuta Avdimetaj

Chairperson of the KCSS Advisory Board



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KCSS at 17 : Insights and reflection from key staff of KCSS

CONTENTS

Statement from ADELINA HASANI, Researcher	1
Statement from JON LIMAJ, Project Office	2
Statement from JETA LOSHAJ, Researcher	3
Statement from TAULANT BOSHJAKU, Project Officer	4
Statement from VESA KROCI, Project Officer	5



KCSS AT 17:

Statement from **ADELINA HASANI,** Researcher

The first time I heard about KCSS, I was immediately impressed by their work on the democratic and inclusive transformation of Kosovo's security sector. Once I joined, I discovered the extensive efforts carried out behind the scenes—particularly in fostering both regional and international cooperation.

One of the most outstanding features of KCSS, something I sensed even before joining, was its inclusive culture within the organization. This welcoming environment, cultivated over the years by individuals who have left a profound mark, it sets a powerful example also by elevating women's roles and nurturing them as leaders in the security sector. On a personal level, I embraced every opportunity KCSS offered to grow professionally and personally. I connected with experts and activists across the region and beyond, collaborating on initiatives aimed at addressing urgent security challenges in the Western Balkans. Drawing on my background in gender and peace studies, I contributed through research, advocacy, and hands-on work with various institutions.

Among my most memorable experiences was working on the “Women, Peace,

and Security” project within security institutions, where I met remarkable women dedicated to the sector's democratic transformation. Another highlight was partnering with Ukraine on a project to counter Russian disinformation and propaganda in the Western Balkans, adapting tactics that had been employed in Ukraine.

Over the years, KCSS has thrived thanks to many bright and committed individuals who believe in uplifting not just the organization but the broader community in Kosovo. In my view, their greatest achievement lies in creating an environment that fosters personal development, champions diversity and unity, and encourages cooperation across all sectors.



Adelina Hasani

Researcher

KCSS AT 17:

Statement from

JON LIMAJ,

Project Officer

My first contact with the organization was through its research on cybersecurity and critical infrastructure, which I often came across while working on related topics. I joined the team on June 1st, 2023, as a Junior Researcher and Project Assistant under the Emerging Threats Programme. Initially, I viewed the organization as a serious, research focused think tank, but after becoming part of the team, I realized how collaborative, supportive, and engaging the working environment truly is.

What I value most is the people. The staff are knowledgeable, open, and genuinely care about creating a positive atmosphere, we work hard, but we also make space to enjoy it. Throughout my time here, I've contributed to several key projects, including Internews, Smart Balkans, and the Regional Youth Partnership, often focusing on critical infrastructure protection, digital safety, and cybersecurity in Kosovo.

One of my most meaningful contributions has been developing a security handbook

designed for NGOs, practical work that supports civil society in a very direct way. This role has helped me grow professionally by improving my research and project coordination skills and deepening my understanding of both technical and policy related issues in the security field.

A project that stands out is our work with the Regional Youth Partnership, where I got to engage in cross-border cooperation, an experience that broadened both my professional and personal perspective.

The values that resonate most with me are integrity, impact-driven research, and a strong commitment to public interest. I truly believe the organization will continue to play a key role in shaping policy, informing stakeholders, and contributing to a safer, more resilient society, especially as new security challenges emerge in the digital era.



Jon Limaj

Junior Researcher/Project Officer



KCSS AT 17:

Statement from **JETA LOSHAJ,** Researcher

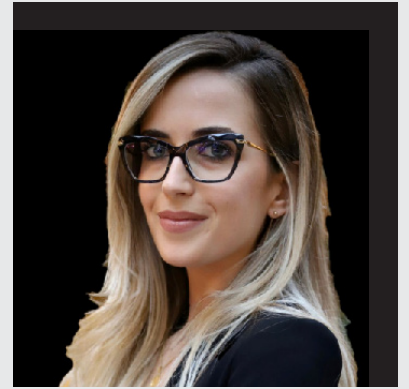
I first heard of KCSS when I was conducting research on foreign policy topics and used KCSS's publications as a reference. I was convinced that I would like to join the KCSS team when I attended the KPDS 2023 Summit, which was an exceptional event addressing challenging topics concerning Kosovo and the Western Balkans.

Before I joined the team, I was curious about KCSS's research methodologies and what it would be like to have a deeper insight into KCSS's projects. Now that I get to be involved both in research and project implementation, all the work is done with integrity, which explains why KCSS's work is perceived as highly credible from outside.

With my background on Russian and East European studies, I have been able to contribute to publishing research that exposes efforts and methods of malign actors in exerting their influence in Kosovo and the region. I would also highlight my involvement in projects related to countering disinformation and strengthening interethnic relations, both of which are interrelated, timely, and important topics to address in Kosovo and the region.

What I value in my journey at KCSS is that it has been beneficial to me both in the educational and the professional aspects. Having joined the KCSS team in September 2024, I am glad I now have the privilege of contributing to the research that KCSS produces for a diverse target audience and that it can serve as a guide for policymakers.

What I first and foremost value at KCSS is the positive and inspirational working atmosphere. Secondly, I also appreciate having connected with KCSS's network of professionals, academics, journalists, CSO, students, and ordinary citizens through our events and projects. Through such a widely inclusive network, KCSS remains a top-tier hub for producing thorough research on important security topics. I envision KCSS to maintain this standard also in the future.



Jeta Loshaj
Researcher

KCSS AT 17:

Statement from TAULANT BOSHNIJAKU, Project Officer



Taulant Boshnjaku

Project Officer

My first contact with the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) was in 2015, when I joined the organization as an intern. This initial engagement marked the beginning of a meaningful and transformative journey. In September 2016, I transitioned into a full-time position, deepening my involvement in the organization's mission and expanding my contributions to its work.

Before joining KCSS, I was already aware of its impactful role in the field of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE). In particular, I was impressed by the organization's groundbreaking 2015 report on radicalization, which had firmly established KCSS as a thought leader in Kosovo and beyond. This research not only shaped public discourse but also positioned the organization at the forefront of policy and community responses to radicalization.

After joining the team, I quickly came to appreciate the collaborative environment and strong sense of shared purpose that define KCSS's internal culture. The openness, professionalism, and mutual support among colleagues fostered a highly motivating work atmosphere that has continued to stand out as one of the organization's greatest strengths. This collaborative spirit, in my view, is a key

driver behind KCSS's success and lasting impact.

One of the aspects I value most about KCSS is its commitment to field-based research and community engagement. During my time at the organization, I had the opportunity to contribute to the P/CVE program by conducting fieldwork focused on the reintegration of returnees and supporting the families of individuals who had come back from conflict zones. This work involved direct engagement with vulnerable communities, providing me with valuable firsthand insight into the multifaceted challenges of radicalization, reintegration, and social resilience. I consider this to be one of my most meaningful contributions to the organization's mission, as it helped bridge the gap between research and real-world impact.

My role at KCSS has significantly influenced my professional growth and development. It sharpened my analytical skills, enhanced my understanding of security-related issues, and deepened my ability to approach complex social challenges with empathy and evidence-based strategies. Moreover, working on the ground with affected families and communities has strengthened my commitment to peacebuilding and social cohesion.

A particularly memorable initiative I was involved in was the implementation of reintegration support mechanisms for returnees and their families. This project not only addressed an urgent social issue but also allowed for collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including local institutions, international partners, and grassroots organizations. The experience highlighted the importance of a holistic, community-centered approach to countering violent extremism.

The core values of KCSS that resonate most with me are integrity, inclusiveness, and a commitment to evidence-based policymaking. These principles are consistently reflected in the organization's work and serve as the foundation for its credibility and influence in the security sector.

Looking ahead, I envision KCSS continuing to expand its reach and impact. As security challenges evolve, I believe the organization will play an increasingly critical role in shaping policies, informing public discourse, and supporting stakeholders through its expertise and grounded research. With its strong foundation, dynamic team, and forward-thinking vision, KCSS is well-positioned to continue serving as a vital actor in promoting peace, resilience, and security—both in Kosovo and in the wider region.



KCSS AT 17:

Statement from **VESA KROCI,** Project Officer

My journey with the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) began when I was accepted as an intern, a moment that marked a turning point in my professional path. Although I had some prior experience in the NGO sector through a previous internship, joining KCSS felt particularly exciting. I had already taken the time to explore their work and read several of their publications, which left a strong impression on me. With a background in Public Policy and Peace and Conflict Studies, I was naturally drawn to the organization's focus areas. The chance to contribute to such impactful research and policy work felt not only aligned with my academic interests but also deeply meaningful on a personal level.

Before officially joining KCSS, I had the opportunity to attend a workshop on the professional development of the Kosovo Probation Service in addressing terrorism and violent extremism. The experience left a strong impression on me, not only because of the quality and relevance of the work being done, but also due to the professionalism and collaboration I observed among my colleagues. It was clear that the team worked with a high level of trust and mutual respect. Upon joining the organization, I immediately noticed the welcoming and supportive work environment. My colleagues were always willing to offer guidance, and their dedication to the mission of KCSS was both evident and inspiring.

What I value most about KCSS is the collaborative and welcoming work environment. The atmosphere is both

professional and friendly, which creates a sense of ease and encourages open communication. Flexibility and mutual understanding are key strengths of the team. Everyone respects one another's responsibilities and supports each other whenever needed. This strong culture of cooperation not only makes day-to-day work more enjoyable but also contributes to increased efficiency and productivity. I particularly appreciate the genuine willingness of colleagues to offer help and guidance, no matter the situation. It is the spirit of teamwork that truly sets KCSS apart.

One of my key contributions to KCSS has been my consistent willingness to support my colleagues across a wide range of tasks whether assisting with research, participating in field activities, or conducting interviews. I've had the opportunity to be involved in several impactful projects, including Women, Peace & Security, the Professional Development of the Kosovo Probation Service, the Regional Youth Partnership Program, and more recently, the REACH project. My experience at KCSS has played a significant role in shaping both my professional and personal growth. It has made me more productive, focused, and confident in navigating professional environments. I've gained valuable insights into how to communicate effectively, build meaningful networks, and conduct myself in various formal and informal settings. Beyond technical skills, KCSS has taught me the deeper value of teamwork, responsibility, and the importance of aligning passion with purpose. A major



Vesa Kroci

Research Assistant/Project Officer

milestone in my journey was being promoted to Project Manager, a step that challenged and empowered me to take ownership, lead with intention, and manage responsibilities independently. This role has strengthened my sense of accountability, broadened my leadership skills, and deepened my commitment to contributing meaningfully to the organization's mission.

The core values that define KCSS are hard work, teamwork, and a strong commitment to driving meaningful change, which are deeply embedded in the organization's culture. These principles are reflected not only in the quality of its research and advocacy but also in the dedication of its people. What truly sets KCSS apart is its ability to foster strong and lasting collaborations with a wide range of partners, including NGOs, academic experts, institutional stakeholders, students, and professionals across various sectors. It is this spirit of partnership and openness to diverse perspectives that gives KCSS its unique strength and resilience. By remaining actively engaged with both local and international actors, KCSS continues to expand its impact and relevance in the field of security studies and beyond. I am confident that the future of KCSS is bright, and its influence will only continue to grow as it builds on these relationships and stays committed to its mission.



#B

Promotion of KCSS Programmes

CONTENTS

Security Sector Good Governance, Integrity and Rule of Law Programme	1
Resilient Community Building Programme	2
Foreign Policy and Regional Cooperation Programme	3
Gender Peace and Security Programme	4
Cyber Security and other Emerging Threats Programme	5
Peacebuilding Programme	5



SECURITY SECTOR GOOD GOVERNANCE, INTEGRITY AND RULE OF LAW PROGRAMME:

The Security Sector Good Governance, Integrity, and Rule of Law Programme is the cornerstone of the Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS), established in 2008. This programme is instrumental in democratizing and developing the security sector in Kosovo, addressing a wide array of security-related issues such as rule of law, integrity building, human rights, gender issues, minority integration, parliamentary oversight, and the relationship between civil society and security institutions.

The programme targets a diverse audience, including security sector professionals, policymakers, civil society organizations, and the general public, aiming to foster a transparent, accountable, and inclusive security sector. It has a broad geographic scope, encompassing the entire region of Kosovo, ensuring that its initiatives and impacts reach across the nation.

Key achievements of the programme include the development and implementation of numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing the integrity and efficiency of security institutions. The programme has successfully launched several publications, providing valuable insights and recommendations on security sector governance. Furthermore, it has organized numerous events, including

workshops, conferences, and seminars, fostering dialogue and collaboration between various stakeholders.

Notably, the programme has achieved significant advocacy goals, such as promoting the integration of minorities into security institutions and enhancing parliamentary oversight of the security sector. It has also established key platforms that continue to operate within its framework, facilitating ongoing engagement and collaboration among stakeholders.

As the security sector evolves and new challenges related to institutional integrity emerge, the programme is being re-designed to meet these new requirements. By combining various approaches and resources, the Security Sector Good Governance, Integrity, and Rule of Law Programme continues to make a profound impact on the community, driving positive change and contributing to the overall democratization and development of Kosovo's security sector.

We use this anniversary as an opportunity to celebrate the hard work done within the frame of this programme over the past 17 years and making sure that we continue to uphold its principles for future success.

*Security Sector Good Governance,
Integrity and Rule of Law Programme*

Email: integrity@qkss.org

Web: <https://qkss.org/en/programet/good-governance-in-security-sector>



BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES/ PREVENTION AND COUNTERING OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM (P/CVE)

*Building Resilient Communities/
Prevention and Countering of Violent
Extremism (P/CVE)*

Email: ResilienceProgramme@qkss.org

Web: <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/programi/countering-violent-extremism>

Building Resilient Communities, formerly known as the Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) Programme, was introduced in January 2015 and remains the largest and most dynamic programme of the Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS). Over the past 17 years, this programme has been instrumental in serving KCSS's goals through its strong portfolio of research and advocacy at national, regional, and international levels. KCSS has conducted numerous research reports and policy papers, alongside dozens of awareness-raising, advocacy, and capacity-building activities. These efforts have positioned KCSS as a member of important international networks of think tanks, most notably the Resolve Network established by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), which includes some of the world's best organizations and universities covering this topic.

The programme has achieved extensive changes in the policy and legal framework of Kosovo in the field of P/CVE, making

it a flagship programme of KCSS with a broad global reach. It targets diverse audiences, including security sector professionals, policymakers, civil society organizations, and the general public, aiming to foster transparent, accountable, and inclusive security practices. Building Resilient Communities covers the entire region of Kosovo, ensuring that its initiatives and impacts are felt nationwide.

Key achievements of the programme include the development and implementation of numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing the integrity and efficiency of security institutions. KCSS has successfully launched tens of publications, providing valuable insights and recommendations on security sector governance. Additionally, the programme has organized numerous events, including workshops, conferences, and seminars, fostering dialogue and collaboration between various stakeholders.

Notably, the programme has reached significant advocacy goals, such as

promoting the integration of minorities into security institutions and enhancing parliamentary oversight of the security sector. Moreover, it has established key platforms that continue to operate within its framework, facilitating ongoing engagement and collaboration among stakeholders.

Looking ahead, the programme will be further developed by maintaining research capacities to keep KCSS engaged in local, regional, and international projects, diversifying partnerships at regional and international levels, launching innovative projects with original ideas, and adapting project activities and themes in line with new dynamics in the field. As KCSS celebrates its 17th anniversary, Building Resilient Communities stands as a testament to the organization's commitment to driving positive change and contributing to the overall democratization and development of Kosovo's security sector.



FOREIGN POLICY AND REGIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME

As one of the key pillars of KCSS's work for the past 17 years, the foreign policy programme covers a wide range of topics that are aimed at navigating Kosovo's place in global affairs. Through numerous analyses on navigating geopolitical dynamics and their implications for Kosovo and the Western Balkans, the programme has sought to explore key strategies that states employ to advance their interests, examining how certain geopolitical developments such as rising tensions and global power shifts affect the Western Balkans, and how Kosovo and the region can utilize diplomacy and regional cooperation as a tool to respond to global events.

Aimed at providing evidence-based and informative research and policy papers, there are a few target audiences that KCSS has sought to reach throughout the years. They include policy-makers from state institutions, academics, and domestic and international researchers who seek to have a better understanding of Kosovo's place in international affairs. Building on the already existing wide network of professionals, researchers, and academics, KCSS has published 58 research papers on foreign policy and regional cooperation. Hosting, organizing, and participating in many international conferences in Kosovo and abroad, has placed KCSS's work on the

map for almost two decades now.

Given the history and Kosovo's trajectory to gaining independence 17 years ago, KCSS has played an important role in managing to share the country's history, promote Kosovo's aspirations and its path to Euro-Atlantic integration, as well as prepare the country for facing threats that are posed from malign actors who seek to damage Kosovo's reputation and distort history. Some analyses include research on the foreign policy discourse of Russia and its influence in Kosovo and the region, the rising Chinese influence in the region, and other threats that seek to disturb Kosovo's path to EU accession.

Through several initiatives and platforms, KCSS has contributed to echoing Kosovo's international subjectivity and advocated for the country's membership in international organizations, by highlighting the importance of seeking enhanced cooperation with key partners from NATO and the EU in order to get membership in Partnership for Peace, the Council of Europe, and ultimately, full membership in NATO and the EU. With a continuous and close monitoring of international developments, KCSS remains an address for providing credible analyses on Kosovo's and the region's role in current and emerging global events.

*Foreign Policy and Regional
Cooperation Programme*

Email: ForeignPolicy@qkss.org

Web: <https://qkss.org/en/programet/bashkepunimi-rajonal-dhe-politika-e-jashtme>

GENDER PEACE AND SECURITY PROGRAMME

The KCSS Gender and Security Programme supports Kosovo's advancement of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, aligned with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. It aims to assist public security institutions in developing gender-responsive internal and external policies, and to promote gender-equal participation in key institutions such as the Kosovo Security Force and the Kosovo Police. A core focus is consolidating research that identifies challenges in implementing gender-sensitive security reforms.

Main pillars of the programme:

Awareness-Raising Campaigns: Increasing public awareness on the importance of implementing the Istanbul Convention and monitoring the enforcement of the National Strategy on Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women 2022-2026.

Policy Development and Advocacy: Enhancing institutional capacity, particularly within the Ministry of Justice and the Kosovo Assembly, to align Kosovo's legal framework with the Istanbul Convention, improve accountability, and strengthen responses to gender-based violence.

Capacity Building Support: Empowering security institutions to integrate gender perspectives and increasing women's active participation and leadership within the sector.

The programme targets women in the security sector, relevant stakeholders, and vulnerable communities across Kosovo. Activities focus on strengthening institutional responses to gender-based violence and promoting the role of women and girls in security matters.

KCSS has produced 16 research reports on Women, Peace, and Security, based on focus groups and interviews across Kosovo. These reports reflect the challenges women face in male-dominated institutions and offer insight into the dynamics of promoting gender sensitivity within them.

The programme emphasizes women as active agents in the security sector. Strengthening this agency is vital to addressing gender-based violence and fostering a more inclusive and effective security environment.



Gender Peace and Security Programme

Email: GenderProgramme@qkss.org

Web: <https://qkss.org/en/programet/gender-and-security>



CYBER SECURITY AND OTHER EMERGING THREATS PROGRAMME

The Cybersecurity and Emerging Threats Programme at the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies is a strategic response to evolving security challenges, focusing on cybersecurity, disinformation, and critical infrastructure risks. It works to inform and empower a broad audience, from policymakers and public sector agencies to civil society, youth, and media through research, awareness campaigns, and capacity building. Primarily active in Kosovo with an expanding reach across the Western Balkans, the programme leverages evidence-based research and advocacy to bolster regional cyber resilience .

KCSS experts published research on cyber threats, foreign influence, and gaps in critical infrastructure protection , including a landmark study on water infrastructure security , launching multiple publications under this programme. These findings have informed policy, for example by guiding Kosovo's alignment with EU foreign investment screening and cybersecurity regulations . The team also launched a nationwide cybersecurity awareness campaign, reaching thousands

of stakeholders and training policymakers on foreign direct investment (FDI) risk screening. In total, the programme organized numerous events and trainings, such as digital safety workshops for NGOs, media literacy trainings for youth, and high-level policy roundtables in Kosovo and abroad. Through partnerships like the Internews Greater Internet Freedom initiative, TAG International's GRC project, the Metamorphosis disinformation project, and the regional Smart Balkans initiative, KCSS delivered targeted awareness and digital safety training to vulnerable groups .

These efforts have strengthened cyber governance and resilience, helping Kosovo and its neighbors counter disinformation, protect critical infrastructure, and advance toward European cybersecurity standards. The programme's work has not only raised public awareness but also directly influenced policy and practice, a testament to its strategic importance for regional stability and digital security.



Cyber Security and other Emerging Threats Programme

Email: EmergingThreat@qkss.org

Web: <https://qkss.org/en/programet/kercenimet-e-reja>

PEACEBUILDING PROGRAMME

Peacebuilding Programme

Email: PeaceBuilding@qkss.org

KCSS Peacebuilding Program

Forging Peace Through Dialogue,
Knowledge, and Trust

Peacebuilding in Kosovo is not just a long-term objective—it is a present-day imperative. Since declaring independence in 2008, Kosovo has been engaged in the twin processes of institutional consolidation and societal cohesion. These efforts are complicated by the legacies of conflict, political fragmentation, external influence, and persistent ethnic divides. While institutions have developed, social trust and interethnic cooperation remain fragile, particularly in regions with mixed populations or a contested political status.

For the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), peacebuilding is not an add-on to its security research agenda—it is its foundation. We view peacebuilding as a strategic effort to counter ethno-political radicalization, disinformation, and division by fostering community resilience, institutional responsiveness, and informed public dialogue. Our work connects the local with the regional, and the grassroots with policy centers. The goal is both democratic deepening and strategic alignment with the Euro-Atlantic community. In this context, KCSS's peacebuilding program is structured around a core commitment: to enable sustainable peace in Kosovo and the Western Balkans through interethnic and interfaith dialogue, and cooperation. The KCSS Peacebuilding Program is guided by the following objectives:

1. Strengthen interethnic cooperation and trust in Kosovo by facilitating dialogue,

cooperation, and shared civic initiatives in multiethnic communities.

2. Advance regional dialogue in the Western Balkans on shared challenges, particularly reconciliation, regional cooperation, and the European integration process.
3. Enhance civil society's role in peacebuilding by building the capacity of local actors to lead, convene, and advocate for inclusive community solutions.
4. Combat divisive narratives and disinformation that hinder interethnic relations and political normalization between Kosovo and Serbia.
5. Produce evidence-based knowledge and policy guidance on the state of interethnic relations, community-level normalization, and societal resilience.

Program Components and Flagship Initiatives

Grassroots Dialogue and Community

Engagement. At the heart of our peacebuilding work is direct engagement with communities. Through projects such as the FIERC and PEAK initiatives, KCSS has developed a robust methodology to facilitate interethnic dialogue at the local level. These initiatives: Create Community Forums for Public Interest where Kosovo Albanians and Serbs jointly identify common concerns and co-create small-scale solutions—from school playgrounds to public awareness initiatives. Promote dialogue-based engagement in divided



municipalities like Mitrovica South/North, Viti/Vitina, and Shtërpçë/Strpce. Focus on practical, shared interests that help normalize relations outside the confines of high-level political talks. These are not symbolic efforts. They build trust where it matters most—between neighbors—and reduce the vulnerability of communities to radical narratives and external manipulation.

Regional Platforms for Dialogue and Cooperation. In 2022, KCSS co-founded the Kosovo Peace and Democracy Summit (KPDS)—a unique regional platform that brings together civil society actors, policymakers, and thought leaders from across the Western Balkans and the EU. KPDS responds to the vacuum left by stalled or ineffective Track I diplomacy. It fosters: Track II diplomacy between civil society and institutions. Critical reflection on Euro-Atlantic relations with Western Balkans, geopolitical pressures, and ethno-political radicalization. Interethnic and interstate cooperation, through panels and policy dialogues that cut across ethnic, political, and national divides. With over 160 participants annually and high-level support from international partners, KPDS has become a reference point in the region for peacebuilding diplomacy driven by civil society.

Addressing Disinformation and Vulnerabilities. Recognizing that peace is as much about narrative as it is about

politics, KCSS is deeply engaged in countering disinformation that targets interethnic relations. Our project, *Examining the Factors of Vulnerability and Resilience: The Nexus Between Disinformation and Interethnic Relations in Kosovo*, is the first in the country to use a mixed-methods approach to map how disinformation worsens ethnic tensions. KCSS also integrates this work with its regional expertise on foreign influence, examining how malign actors exploit interethnic fault lines in Kosovo for strategic gain.

Policy Incubator for Peace. Peace cannot be sustained without transparent and accountable institutions. KCSS is working to improve the transparency of Kosovo's role in the EU-led normalization dialogue with Serbia, through the project *Promoting Government Transparency and Accountability in Inter-ethnic Dialogue*. This includes monitoring the Kosovo government's engagement in the dialogue, convening public hearings, and advocating for a citizen-informed policy approach. The project also includes public awareness campaigns to improve dialogue literacy and reduce the effects of nationalist rhetoric and misinformation. These efforts complement our work in policy innovation and advocacy, providing concrete mechanisms for civil society to shape normalization from the bottom up.

Youth As Peace Agents. KCSS recognizes

that peace must be intergenerational. Our projects target young people from marginalized ethnic groups in the Western Balkans and within Kosovo, to create platforms for intercultural learning, shared storytelling, and youth-led civic initiatives. It supports youth participation in socio-political, economic, and educational spheres, enabling young people to become architects of reconciliation and inclusion. Policy Labs that bring together local officials, civil society, and researchers to co-design community solutions. Deeper partnerships with regional think tanks to align local peacebuilding with regional strategic dialogue. KCSS believes youth is not just recipients of peace; they are its agents.

Peace as a Civic Duty

For KCSS, peacebuilding is not only a program. It is a civic responsibility anchored in our mission to support Kosovo's development as a democratic, diverse, and European society. At a time of geopolitical uncertainty and regional volatility, our peacebuilding program is a clear, grounded, and principled effort to keep dialogue alive—across communities, across generations, and across borders. KCSS will continue to be a home for those who believe that peace is built not just through agreements, but through trust, dignity, and shared purpose.



#C

Promotion of KCSS Tools & Platforms

CONTENTS

Western Balkans Security Barometer	1
Women Security Forum	1
Community Forums for Public Interest (CFPI)	2
Security Briefs: One-page publications that offer concise and insightful security analyses	3
Security Insights: Video products that provide in-depth discussions on pertinent security issues	4



Western Balkans Security Barometer

The Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB), established in September 2012 by KCSS, utilized quantitative research methods to support its thematic programs. Unlike other sector-focused initiatives, WBSB employed a unique methodology through annual surveys that measured citizens' trust in security and justice institutions, as well as their perceptions of security threats in Kosovo. The program also conducted special surveys targeting specific audiences or issues and became a recognized brand in the region. KCSS

expanded WBSB to Kosovo, Albania, and Serbia, with plans to include all WB6 countries. Future developments focused on maintaining a diverse team for various program aspects, including methodologists, researchers, and quality assurance officers, establishing WBSB as a sustainable regional public perception measurement tool, and enhancing data visualization while increasing communication products and advocating for public outreach.

The Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB), launched by KCSS in 2012, uses annual surveys to gauge public trust in security and justice institutions and perceptions of threats in Kosovo. Its unique methodology and targeted surveys helped establish it as a recognized regional initiative. Expanded to Albania and Serbia, with plans for all WB6 countries, WBSB aims to remain a sustainable tool by maintaining a diverse team, improving data visualization, and boosting public communication and outreach.



Women Security Forum

The Gender and Security Programme at the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) was developed to support Kosovo's efforts in implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. The programme works closely with public security institutions such as the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) and Kosovo Police (KP) to promote gender-responsive internal and external policies, and to

ensure gender-equal participation across the sector.

It also contributes to advancing gender-responsive security reform by conducting in-depth research and analysis on the key challenges facing women in the field of security. The programme supports central and local advocacy efforts, and carries out baseline, midline, and endline monitoring of recruitment practices within Kosovo's

security institutions. All activities are aligned with Kosovo's legal commitments under the Law on Gender Equality and national WPS objectives.

In addition to its core initiatives, the programme has held conferences and published reports that highlight the role and challenges of women in the security sector, further contributing to public awareness and institutional accountability.



Community Forums for Public Interest (CFPI)

The **Community Forum for Public Initiatives (CFPI)** has proven to be a vital mechanism for promoting interethnic cooperation, community engagement, and inclusive development. Throughout 2023, the CFPI played a central role in fostering dialogue and collaboration across ethnic lines, establishing itself as a model of peaceful coexistence and shared problem-solving.

One of the most striking observations made by the CFPI team was the harmonious interaction between Serbian and Albanian students and staff in shared educational spaces. This environment, enriched with communal green areas and sports facilities, serves as a powerful symbol of unity and mutual respect. The fact that students from different ethnic backgrounds learn, play, and grow together reflects the success of the CFPI's underlying mission: to build bridges across communities through inclusive and participatory approaches.

A key strength of the CFPI process lies

in its ability to bring together diverse stakeholders—local authorities, educators, and community members—to identify common priorities and co-develop solutions. During their visits, the CFPI team not only observed positive interethnic relations but also engaged openly with school authorities to better understand local needs. This collaborative approach led to the identification of tangible priorities such as the need for a new playground, access to drinking water, improved infrastructure, and enhanced safety features. By focusing on shared interests that benefit the whole community, CFPI ensures that projects are both inclusive and impactful.

The significance of the CFPI's work in 2023 was further underscored by its sustained engagement across six municipalities. Regular meetings provided platforms for communities to review progress, exchange ideas, and reinforce their commitment to interethnic cooperation. These forums enabled meaningful dialogue, helping break

down barriers and build trust between communities that have historically experienced division.

Moreover, the CFPI has helped redefine the way local concerns are addressed. Instead of top-down interventions, the initiative empowers local communities to take the lead in identifying and addressing their own needs. This bottom-up approach not only ensures more relevant and sustainable solutions but also nurtures a sense of ownership and responsibility among all involved.

In essence, the CFPI serves as more than just a project platform—it is a dynamic and evolving space for reconciliation, development, and inclusive dialogue. Its success demonstrates that when communities focus on shared goals, such as improving education, infrastructure, and public spaces, they can overcome ethnic divisions and work together toward a better future.



Security Briefs: One-page publications that offer concise and insightful security analyses

Security Briefs are short, one-page analyses that offer timely and accessible insights into key security challenges facing Kosovo and the region. Created to inform policymakers, civil society, media, and the public, these briefs break down complex topics, ranging from cybersecurity and disinformation to regional stability, into clear takeaways. Each brief is based in solid research and presented in a straightforward format, highlighting key findings and practical recommendations. They are published regularly on www.qkss.org and actively promoted across social media platforms such as Facebook,

LinkedIn, and Twitter to reach a wider audience. The goal is to promote informed dialogue, encourage critical thinking, and contribute to a better understanding of emerging threats and policy responses. As part of a broader effort to support democratic oversight and effective security governance, these briefs serve as a fast, reliable way to stay informed as the landscape continues to shift.

In addition to producing security briefs, we also find ways to engage the public, especially young people in important conversations about peace and security.

From time to time, we organize essay contests, such as “What NATO Means to You?” which marked NATO’s 70th anniversary and 20 years of KFOR in Kosovo. Young people were invited to share personal reflections on NATO’s presence and meaning in their lives. The top essays were reviewed by our research team and published online, offering young writers a unique chance to contribute their voices to the broader security debate. It’s initiatives like these that keep our work grounded in the real experiences and perspectives of the people we serve.



Security Talks (Video Platform of the KCSS)

Security Talks is the flagship video product of the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), designed to serve as the main platform for a diverse range of video format products. This innovative platform aims to enhance public engagement and awareness on security issues through various types of video content.

Live streaming of KCSS activities provides real-time insights into our work, allowing the public to stay informed about our latest initiatives and events. These live broadcasts offer a transparent view of our efforts in promoting security and protection.

Video presentations showcase KCSS projects and research findings, sharing valuable knowledge and insights with the public. These presentations are designed to educate and inform viewers about

critical security issues and the work being done to address them.

Motivational videos are tailored for different target audiences, aiming to inspire and encourage civic engagement. By highlighting stories of resilience and success, these videos seek to motivate individuals to take an active role in their communities.

Awareness-raising videos focus on increasing public awareness about various security and protection issues. These videos aim to educate viewers on topics such as disaster preparedness, building safety standards, and risk management.

Podcasts offer in-depth discussions on important security topics, featuring experts and thought leaders in the field. These audio sessions provide a platform for exploring complex issues and sharing diverse perspectives.

Recorded webinars provide opportunities for learning and discussion in an accessible and flexible format. These webinars cover a wide range of security-related topics, offering viewers the chance to engage with experts and gain valuable insights.

The thematic scope of Security Talks extends to all thematic programmes of KCSS, ensuring comprehensive coverage of various security-related issues. This platform is a valuable resource for anyone interested in security and protection, offering rich and diverse content to inform and educate the public. Through Security Talks, KCSS aims to foster a culture of safety and prevention, enhance community preparedness, and support sustainable risk management practices.



#D

Online Presence

CONTENTS

KCSS WEBPAGE	1
LinkedIn	2
X (Twitter)	3
Instagram	4
YouTube Account	5



KCSS Webpage:

Follow us : <https://qkss.org/en/>

The screenshot shows the KCSS website homepage with a blue and white color scheme. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, News, Programs, Projects, Partners, Publications, About Us, and Contact. A search icon and language selector (EN) are also present. The main banner features a webinar announcement: "Join our Webinar on Regional Security Cooperation in the Western Balkans" with a QR code and "REGISTER" buttons. Below this is a "Programs" section with icons and titles for "Building Resilient Communities/Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism (P/CVE)", "Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB)", "Gender, Peace and Security", "Foreign Policy and Regional Security Cooperation", and "Emerging Threats". The "Leader of security sector in Kosovo and Western Balkans" section includes three statistics: 20 years of experience, 100 research reports, and 1000 advocating activities. A "FEATURED" section highlights "KCSS is in New York to Participate in the Second Annual Civil Society-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding" with a photo of a conference. The "Publications" section displays three book covers: "QKSS" logo, "EXPLORING OPTIONS FOR ADVANCING KOSOVO-NATO RELATIONS", and "Inclusion of the Six Countries of the Western Balkans (WB6) in the European Union Rule of Law Report".

LinkedIn

The LinkedIn account of KCSS continues to grow steadily, reaching a total of 1,654 followers, with 103 new followers gained in the last 30 days alone. This growth reflects the organization's increasing visibility and impact across sectors. The audience is diverse, with a strong representation from the International Affairs sector (10.6%), followed by professionals in Higher Education (9.1%), Government Administration (8.4%), and Non-profit Organizations (7.4%). Additional followers include individuals from Civic and Social Organizations, Think Tanks, Research Services, and related fields.

KCSS's content consistently engages a community of professionals who are actively interested in policy, security, and development topics. Through regular, targeted posts and thought leadership content, the platform maintains a meaningful level of interaction, connecting with experts, institutions, and stakeholders who align with the organization's mission.

Follow us: [Kosovar Centre for Security Studies \(KCSS\)](#)

Facebook

KCSS's Facebook page, launched in 2012 as the organization's first social media platform, has played a central role in building a strong and engaged community over the years. With a current total of 10,153 followers, the page continues to serve as a key channel for outreach and public engagement.

Over the last 28 days, the page recorded 13,115 views, reached 4,578 users, and generated 166 content interactions—demonstrating consistent and meaningful audience engagement. The follower base is slightly more female (52.8%) than

male (47.2%), with the majority located in Kosovo (7,234), followed by Germany (585), Albania (458), Macedonia (268), and Serbia (252).

As KCSS's longest-running digital platform, Facebook has been instrumental in promoting the organization's work on security, governance, and civil society, while fostering connections with audiences both locally and across the region.

Follow us: [@KCSSQKSS](#)



KCSS has been active on X (formerly Twitter) since May 2013, steadily growing its presence with 1,966 followers. The platform serves as a dynamic space where KCSS shares updates on key initiatives such as developing cyber defense strategies, fostering interethnic cooperation, and promoting grassroots efforts and international partnerships—especially around improving the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue for peace. On X, KCSS engages audiences with timely insights on Kosovo's EU integration, fighting disinformation, and increasing citizen participation in addressing issues like corruption and environmental challenges.

The content shared by KCSS on X, targets a diverse audience interested in security, policy, and regional stability in Southeast Europe, particularly Kosovo. Their audience likely includes:

Policy Makers and Government Officials, Researchers and Think Tank Communities, Civil Society and Activists, International Organizations and Diplomats, General Public Interested in Security and Extremism.

Follow us: [@KCSSQKSS](#)

Instagram

Since launching in May 2023, our Instagram journey has been all about connecting with youth, raising awareness, and sharing impactful information on the issues that matter most. With 123 posts and a growing community of 202 followers, we're using this platform to spark conversations, inspire action, and bring you closer to our work in peacebuilding, security, and civic engagement.

From behind-the-scenes moments to key highlights from our projects, we're here to keep you informed, involved, and inspired.

Follow us: [KCSSQKSS](#)

YouTube

The KCSS YouTube account serves as a dynamic platform for engaging a broad audience through a variety of content formats, including live videos, podcasts, and shorts. By utilizing live streaming, KCSS can provide real-time coverage of key events, discussions, and conferences, allowing viewers to participate and interact with ongoing dialogues.

The podcast series offers in-depth analysis and interviews with experts, providing valuable insights into critical topics within the security sector and beyond. Additionally, the YouTube shorts feature enables the delivery of quick, impactful content, perfect for sharing highlights, updates, and brief informational pieces. Overall, the KCSS YouTube channel enhances outreach and fosters a global community interested in critical issues related to governance, security, and regional cooperation.

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Barometri i sigurisë:

Follow us: securitybarometer.qkss.org

Do you believe that the current leader of your country want the dialogue to succeed?

Response	Percentage
I don't know/ N...	~5%
No	~15%
Yes	~75%

Methodology About WBSB Partners Donor Publications

Methodology

The Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews with randomly selected respondents throughout Kosovo, Albania, and Serbia. The field research was conducted in the second part of September 2022.

The first stage of drawing the sample was based in the administrative / regional divisions of each country. The number of surveys conducted in each administrative / regional area was drawn in proportion to the number of populations for each municipality within the respective areas based on the population censuses or Election Commission data.

The questionnaire for the survey primarily consisted of closed-ended questions in the form of five Likert Scale, followed by several open-ended questions without predefined options. The national sample for the survey featured 1134 households in Kosovo, 1124 in Albania and 1020 in Serbia.

Within the municipalities, the sample was structured into urban/suburban/rural sample based on the number of households in each area. Random patterns were used to select the households.



KCSS
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

About KCSS

Established in April 2008, the Kosovar Center for Security Studies (KCSS) is a specialized, independent, and non-governmental organization. The primary goal of KCSS is to promote the democratization of the security sector in Kosovo and to improve research and advocacy work related to security, the rule of law, and regional and international cooperation in the field of security.

KCSS aims to enhance the effectiveness of the Security Sector Reform (SSR) by supporting SSR programs through its research, events, training, advocacy, and direct policy advice.

Advancing new ideas and social science methods are also core values of the centre. Every year, KCSS publishes numerous reports, policy analysis and policy briefs on security-related issues. It also runs more than 200 public events including conferences, roundtables, and debates, lectures – in Kosovo, also in collaboration with regional and international partners.

A wide-range of activities includes research, capacity-building, awareness raising and advocacy. KCSS's work covers a wide range of topics, including but not limited to security sector reform and development; identifying and analyzing security risks related to extremism, radicalism, and organized crime; foreign policy and regional cooperation; and evaluating the rule of law in Kosovo.

For more details about KCSS, you can check on the following official platforms:



qkss.org
securitybarometer.qkss.org



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