



POLICY BRIEF: DIGITAL INCLUSION IN KOSOVO

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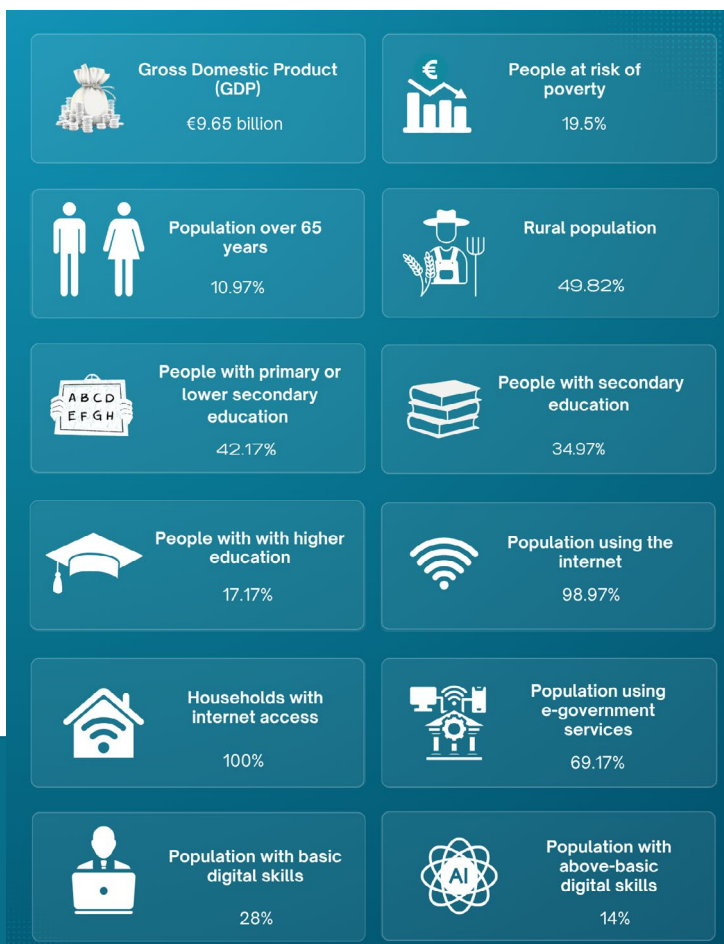
Current Situation in Kosovo

Digital inclusion (DI) has become increasingly prominent in Kosovo's political agenda, reflected notably in the Digital Agenda for Kosovo 2030 and the e-Government Strategy (2023-2027). These policies emphasize infrastructure development, public service digitalization, and enhancing digital skills among the general population. However, despite partial alignment with the EU acquis in the telecommunications sector, critical gaps remain, particularly in addressing digital skills for vulnerable groups. DI policies primarily focus on broad infrastructure development with limited targeted measures to ensure equitable access and usage for marginalized populations.

Basic Indicators

Vulnerable Groups and Causes of Digital Exclusion

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| | Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities (limited digital skills, lack of infrastructure) |
| | Elderly individuals (65+ years) (low digital literacy, difficulty using digital platforms) |
| | People with disabilities (lack of accessible digital services, high cost of assistive technology) |
| | Rural populations (limited access to reliable broadband and modern digital tools) |
| | Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (inability to afford equipment and internet, low digital literacy) |



Main Challenges and Policy Recommendations

Challenges:

- Digital Divide:** Significant disparity between urban and rural digital infrastructure.
- Low Levels of Digital Skills:** Wide digital skills gap affecting especially elderly, low-educated, and marginalized groups.
- Limited Focus on Vulnerable Groups:** National strategies lack specific targeted measures for digital inclusion of vulnerable populations.

Weak Implementation and Coordination: Limited cross-sectoral cooperation and unclear responsibilities among public institutions.

Underdeveloped Digital Education Ecosystem: Insufficient investment in digital infrastructure and teacher capacity building.

Promising Policy Example: Kosovo Digital Economy (KODE) Project

DESCRIPTION: The Kosovo Digital Economy (KODE) Project¹, implemented by the Ministry of Economy (2019–2024) with support from the World Bank, aimed at reducing digital inequalities by expanding broadband connectivity, particularly in rural and underserved areas, and improving digital skills through targeted training.

Recommendations:

- **Systematically integrate digital literacy into education:** Embed digital literacy in curricula and lifelong learning, emphasizing teacher training for practical classroom use of digital tools, bridging existing skill gaps.
- **Enhance accessibility of e-government services:** Adopt unified accessibility standards and simplified, mobile-friendly interfaces, particularly supporting elderly users, persons with disabilities, and low-skilled groups.
- **Expand community digital access points:** Establish or improve community digital hubs and school ICT labs with dedicated support staff, aiding citizens lacking personal digital devices and internet connectivity.
- **Institutionalize regular digital inclusion assessments:** Conduct periodic national assessments of digital access, skills, and usage, disaggregated by demographics, to enable evidence-based policy-making and enhance accountability.
- **Promote cross-sectoral partnerships for digital inclusion:** Foster collaborative projects between public institutions, private sector, and civil society, creating scalable and innovative solutions for digital inclusion through shared infrastructure and clearly defined regulatory frameworks.
- **Provide targeted subsidies for connectivity and digital devices:** Implement financial assistance schemes to help marginalized households afford internet connectivity and digital devices, reducing digital inequalities.
- **Integrate accessibility criteria in public procurement:** Mandate accessibility and usability standards for all publicly procured ICT solutions and platforms, supported by regular audits.
- **Support CSO-led digital inclusion programs:** Provide sustainable financial and institutional backing to civil society organizations delivering tailored digital skills training and improving service access for vulnerable communities.

Main Actions:

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| ● | Deployment of broadband internet infrastructure in 203 villages. |
| ● | Enhanced internal digital connectivity in 197 primary and secondary schools. |
| ● | Establishing the Kosovo Research and Education Network (KREN). |
| ● | Provision of digital skills training to 2,190 youth, emphasizing employability and online work, including targeted outreach to women (881 female participants). |

Implementing Bodies: Ministry of Economy, supported by the World Bank.

Impact: KODE significantly improved digital access in rural communities, narrowed infrastructure gaps, and provided foundational digital skills to youth, enhancing their employability. It demonstrates how focused investment and cross-sectoral cooperation can effectively address core digital inclusion challenges and serve as a scalable model for broader digital transformation in Kosovo.



¹ <https://kodeproject.org/>