

# The Challenger

Follow us on Twitter @MCDevKosovo

EDITION  
**ONE**  
2016

## Kosovo ready to face development challenges

Compacts are large, five-year grants for countries that pass MCC's eligibility criteria. Kosovo passed the criteria by improving indicators in area such as democratic rights, fight against corruption and economic freedoms.

Created by the U.S. Congress in January 2004 with strong bipartisan support, MCC is changing the conversation on how best to deliver smart U.S. foreign assistance by focusing on good policies, country ownership, and results.

MCC is a prime example of smart U.S. Government assistance in action, benefiting both developing countries and U.S. taxpayers through:

**- Competitive selection:** Before a country can become eligible to receive assistance, MCC's Board examines its performance on independent and transparent policy indicators and selects compact-eligible countries based on policy performance.

**- Country-led solutions:** MCC requires selected countries to identify their priorities for achieving sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. Countries develop their MCC proposals in broad consultation within their society. MCC teams then work in close partnership to help countries refine a program.

**- Country-led implementation:** When a country is awarded a compact, it sets up its own local accountable entity, called the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), to manage and oversee all aspects of implementation. Monitoring of funds is rigorous and transparent, often through independent fiscal agents. In December 2015, the MCC Board of Directors selected Kosovo as eligible to develop a compact.

After the selection of Kosovo for the compact program, Prime Minister of Kosovo Isa Mustafa said that one of the most important achievements of Kosovo

*The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is an innovative and independent U.S. foreign aid agency that is helping lead the fight against global poverty. In December 2015, the MCC Board of Directors selected Kosovo as eligible to develop a compact.*

over the past years has been the decision of the Board of MCC to select Kosovo to benefit a broad investment grant from the agency. "In December last year, Kosovo was qualified to develop the program "Compact Assistance, extensive investment program that will enable Kosovo to transform the economy with special focus on creation of new jobs and eradicate poverty," said Prime Minister Mustafa.

Former MCC Vice President, Kamran Khan said that the selection of Kosovo by the Board of MCC's program "Compact" has proved the great progress that has been made in this new place, the establishment of democratic principles, to the rule of law and the progress made in many indicators, most of which are reflected in the MCC's scorecard.

"These are indicators according to MCC in terms of selection of places for the program" Compact ". And for Kosovo to be selected at this early age and in a fairly short period of time, is a great achievement," - said former MCC Vice President Khan.



*Kosovo is not alone. You have friends ready to help all over the world - and no greater friend than the United States of America. We want to help you transform your economy, reduce poverty, and promote a more prosperous future for the people of Kosovo and the children of Kosovo. That's why, last December, the Millennium Challenge Corporation selected Kosovo to create a new development assistance compact between our nations. That could potentially provide hundreds of millions of dollars - direct dollars to Kosovo - to help foster a better environment for business growth and to draw outside investment, which will create urgently needed jobs.*



US Vice President **Joe Biden**

# BITS AND PIECES

## Our joint journey to reform Kosovo

**Dr Isa Mustafa**  
Prime Minister of Kosovo

*Kosovo's Prime Minister Dr Isa Mustafa, writes on the difficult past of the country and the reforms that the local institutions have undertaken to enable Kosovo qualify for the MCC Compact*

As the youngest nation in Europe, with a very difficult past, Kosovo made its most significant efforts towards reconstruction and development. Post-war tasks were enormous but support we received from friends from around the world was substantial. United States government, the EU institutions and members states, NATO as well as donor agencies from as far as Japan and Canada have provided meaningful support in reconstruction the country and establishment of institutions.

Times have now changed. Kosovo is a country that has entered the formal contractual agreement with the European Union, a sign of stability and dedication to the highest European standards of governance, free market and open society. The needs of Kosovo have thus changed as well. We must now enter deeper reforms to create a contemporary public administration, fight the corruption and help state institutions become more responsive to the citizens' needs. These reforms must create a landscape that is attractive for foreign investors.

Our government has started these reforms. We have recorded success in tackling corruption, we have maintained dedication to freedom of economic activity and we have nurtured a vibrant and dynamic civil society.

This is why last year Kosovo has managed to fulfill the principle indicators that have qualified us for a Compact program by the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Our successes were measured by independent organizations and UN agencies. We have also scored success in ranking of **Doing Business** in Kosovo while our growth rate has been the highest in the Western Balkans. We aspire to further strengthen growth rate and job creation. We are committed to continue significant policy reforms towards fighting corruption such as introduction of electronic procurement system or contracting independent organizations to monitor recruitment process for senior public positions.

Our economic growth has been dependent on contributions from the vast Kosovo diaspora, both in form of remittances as well as diaspora FDI. We must now unlock new sources of financing and investment for our capital projects. We must solve the bottlenecks in our economy, from the reliable energy supply to predictable judicial system and prompt tax administration.

I have established the Office of MCC Compact development in my own Office of Prime Minister and we have dedicated resources and invested high hopes that the compact between Millennium Challenge Development Office and Kosovo will indeed both tackle some of the crucial challenges in our economy as well as collect data on Kosovo's success to fulfil critical indicators of good governance.

We want to unleash the positive force of Kosovo people and we are thankful that Millennium Challenge Development Office and US government have put faith on this joint journey of ours.



**Greg Delawie**  
Ambassador of the United States to Kosovo

*Raspberries, and at that, Kosovo raspberries, are my absolute favorite fruit!*

Nothing quite compares to the health benefits of raspberries, which include fighting cancer, maintaining cardiovascular health, boosting mood, memory and immunity, and so much more.

I was recently at a raspberry farm in Katunishte, where I could eat raspberries fresh off the bush. It was a great opportunity to meet many of the village farmers, who have almost all begun commercially growing raspberries, following in the footsteps of a few successful start-ups by their neighbors. Not only did the raspberries taste wonderful, but their impact on the local economy was clear. Today, these farmers sustain their families with income from raspberry sales. Previously the farmers made \$300 per hectare growing wheat, now they can earn \$8000 - 10,000 per hectare with raspberries. They also employ their families and have offered jobs to many people from around the village during harvesting season.

You can find this ripple effect in many regions of Kosovo. It is estimated that more than 1500 farmers are growing raspberries in different regions throughout Kosovo, and about 1000 hectares of raspberries are currently under cultivation. Kosovo's raspberries are not only tasty, but they are an important part of the agricultural development that is helping to grow Kosovo's economy. I only wish they were available year-round!

The  
**Challenger**

This newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Office of the Prime Minister / MCC Development Office. Opinions published may not reflect opinions of the Government of Kosovo or MCK

/ **Publisher:** Petrit Selimi / **Editor:** Rina Meta / **Design:** Trekuartista / **Contact:** MCK, 3rd floor, Government building, Nena Tereze PN, Prishtina, Kosovo / **email:** mccooffice@rks-gov.net



Republika e Kosovës - Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo  
**Qeveria - Vlada - Government**  
Zyra e Kryeministrit - Ured Premijera - Office of the Prime Minister



**MILLENNIUM**  
CHALLENGE KOSOVO



Kosovo Assembly Speaker Kadri Veseli signed Tuesday a MoU with the US company "Stone Alliance".  
 "Arrival of the US company and employment of 2500 people is very important," said Veseli noting that this company would send a clear signal to other potential foreign investors to invest in Kosovo.



The European Commission is expected to recommend that Kosovan citizens enjoy visa free travel within the Schengen area, even though a handful of EU member states. Although it began talks with Brussels on a liberalised visa regime in January 2012, Kosovo is the only western Balkan country without Schengen visa-free travel status.

## Growth Continues, Unemployment Remains High in Kosovo...

Growth in Kosovo is projected at 3.6 percent in 2016, down slightly from 3.9 percent in 2015, and is forecasted to reach 3.7 percent by 2018, according to the latest Southeast Europe Regular Economic Report (SEERER), launched in September 24 in Brussels.

Fiscal adjustment measures, such as tax reforms and the fight against informality, continued to boost revenue performance in the first half of 2016. However, the unanticipated large number beneficiaries of social transfers program for war veterans added

to fiscal pressures and pushed the deficit to about 2.5 percent of GDP. FDI fell by 36 percent in the first half of 2016. Most of the FDI this year continued to be attracted by real estate, rentals, and business activities, followed by the financial sector. The financial sector is performing well, with profits high, Non-Performing Loans low, and lower interest rates that are boosting lending.

however more needs to be done to gradually shift to higher domestic productivity and enhanced external competitiveness, if Kosovo is to close the income gap with Europe in the medium term.

At the regional level, economic growth is expected to reach 2.7 percent in 2016, up from 2.2 percent in 2015. Moderate acceleration of growth is projected to continue through 2017 and 2018.

The outlook remains positive. Economic growth in Kosovo is supported by domestic demand

*Excerpt from a report with the same name, published at worldbank.org on 24th of September*

### favorite tweets



Amb. Greg Delawie @AmbDelawie

Joined @USAIDKosovo & GoK in signing MoU to improve rule of law, increase investment & employment in #Kosovo. Important work ahead!



Nataliya Apostolova @ApostolovaEU

Announced 20 mil more investment in heating in #Pristina & #Gjakova, stressed full transparency & accountability in spending #EU money 2/3



USAID Kosovo @USAIDKosovo

New technology increases #Kosovo yields by 50% percent. Thanks to #AGRO & strategic partners.

## ...While IMF raises Kosovo 2016 GDP growth projection to 4.1%

PRISTINA (Kosovo), October 4 (SeeNews) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday it has increased its 2016 economic growth forecast for Kosovo to 4.1% in its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) survey, from 3.4% projected in the previous WEO edition released in April.

Next year, the country's economic growth is expected to slow down to 3.3%, the IMF said in the October edition of its World Economic Outlook. In April, the IMF forecast Kosovo's economy would expand by 4.3% in 2017. In 2021, Kosovo's economy is expected to grow by 4.0%, the IMF said.

## Healthy report of Kosovo's banking sector

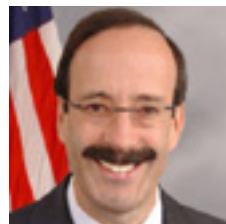
Central Bank of Kosovo has issued the latest quarterly report, notifying the public of improving results of the banking sector in Kosovo. Non-performing loans continue to be among lowest in the Western Balkans in the second quarter of the year, dropping to

5.3% of the total loan portfolio in country's banks. The average interest rates also continue to drop, now averaging around 7.2%, spurring modest growth in private and commercial crediting. The average interest rate on saving also increased modestly, now averaging 1%.



"Kosovo has qualified in 2015 for the MCC Compact. Now we must work hard to maintain our improved record. We must deliver in fight against corruption. We must protect our economic freedoms and further expand our democracy. This will enable us to bring to Kosovo fresh investments from one of the most innovative aid agencies in the world. We must help Millennium Challenge Corporation to help us. This is how we will grow further our economy. This is how we will create new jobs. It's important to say that American support for Kosovo has brought massive regional dividends for peace and stability in the Balkans"

**Petrit Selimi**  
National Coordinator for the MCK



"I congratulate the people of Kosovo and the country's leaders, and I welcome the decision to select Kosovo as eligible for an MCC Compact. Today's exceptional achievement is another significant step forward in Kosovo's clear progress since its independence in February 1998. Kosovo's path to today's announcement was long and arguably more difficult than any other country, making this victory even more impressive. Kosovo has made great strides in advancing democracy, fighting corruption, and solidifying the rights of its citizens."

**Rep Eliot Engel**, Ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of US Congress

# ANALYSIS

by **Alban ZOGAJ**  
Chief Economist at MCC Kosovo

*Constraints Analysis (CA) is an attempt to accomplish a comprehensive analysis of constraints that hinder the economic development of Kosovo.*

*It analyses a number of potential problems identified by the compact development team, jointly with key stakeholders in Kosovo (private sector, public sector and civil society). An important tool used to identify the potential constraints is the comparison of Kosovo's performance with the achievements attained by other countries, especially by those from the region. Constraints Analysis follows the growth diagnostics methodology proposed by Hausmann, Rodrik and Velasco (HRV).*

*The main premise for the methodology is that different countries do not necessarily face the same set of problems. Therefore, a successful growth strategy has to be in line with the economic environment at hand and focus on two or three main (most binding) constraints.*

*Consequently, the Kosovo CA aims to identify the constraints that are binding to Kosovo's economic growth, and which should be targeted in the framework of the MCC program and other growth policies. Overall, the analysis should provide a general answer to the question "what is stopping investments and growth?"*

*The compact development team, in close coordination with MCC team in Washington D.C., identified a number of constraints to be further analyzed, starting from access and cost of finance, through to access and quality of education, lack of energy, lack of water, pollution of environment, physical infrastructure, rule of law, perception regarding rule of law, and low labor participation. After analyzing in details all above mentioned constraints to growth, and comparing them to other countries in the region, the team concluded that the most binding constraints to Kosovo's economic growth are: 1. Lack of energy, 2. Rule of law and perception regarding rule of law, and 3. Environmental services (water, environment and health issues). In the coming part of the article I will present briefly some of the main arguments.*

## Lack of Energy

Lack of Energy – one of the most binding constraints in Kosovo is the unreliable supply of energy, as evidenced by, e.g., system average interruption duration and frequency indices (SAIDI and SAIFI) of 67 and 27, respectively.

Businesses in Kosovo report comparatively high losses due to outages, indicating they see particularly high costs due to electricity supply disruptions. In addition, Kosovo ranks extremely poorly on the Doing Business report's "Reliability of supply and transparency of tariff" index, ranking 2 out of 7.

Firms have invested a lot in circumventing the constraint. Ownership of generators for firms is very high, and current usage of generators is high. Around 14% of households spend more than a third of total family income on electricity.

Demand for energy currently surpasses the supply of energy, but there has been little movement on addressing the gap. Losses in the network are high, with 16% technical, 10% commercial, and 5% political.

# Unleashing what are the constraints econo



*While perceptions may outpace reality, perceptions of challenges in Kosovo are at least in part founded in reality. The process of EU accession and establishing a new country has led to the development of increasingly sophisticated laws on paper, but the ability of line agencies to implement has lagged behind.*

## Rule of Law

Rule of Law - in a 2014 survey of potential investors, the most frequent recommendation for Kosovo was "better anti-corruption" (IFC). Similarly, Kosovo consistently does worse than comparators on surveys of perception of rule of law (e.g. Corruption Perceptions Index).

And yet, these measures of the perception of rule-of-law seem to exceed the reality on the ground. On every available metric of de facto crime and corruption (e.g. how often do firms pay bribes) Kosovo does average or better than comparators (countries in the region).

# g Kosovo: ne principle of the local omy?



Photo by Jetmir Idrizi

The drivers of the negative perception of Kosovo among external investors are numerous. Sources of information that could provide investors with positive narrative of Kosovo are few. KIESA, the agency in charge of investment promotion, has a small budget. Kosovo's large Diaspora is an under-utilized resource for marketing the country and attracting investment.

Consultations with private sector revealed that Kosovar firms looking for international partners find it challenging to overcome the country's reputation in large part due to visa restrictions and the difficulty to travel to secure business deals. While perceptions may outpace reality, perceptions of challenges in Kosovo are at least in part founded in reality. The process of EU accession and establishing a new country has led to the development of increasingly sophisticated laws on paper, but the ability of line agencies to implement has lagged behind.

According to consultations, delays in the judiciary are especially long and harmful in cases regarding tax administration, customs duties, or regulatory disagreement.

The Independent Review Board, which formerly handled tax and customs disputes, was reviewing nearly a thousand cases a year before being closed in 2013. In contrast, the court system now manages to settle only a fraction of that number and takes longer to reach a decision. The combination of de facto rule-of-law issues with excess perception of the problems by the international business community creates a binding constraint to investment and growth in Kosovo.



## Environmental Services

Environmental Services - Due to the convergence of factors in health, water, and energy sections of the HRV constraints tree, the compact development team identified a constraint, named as "Environmental Services," that captures the impact of related problems in these three sectors. Kosovo faces high levels of environmental contamination from a variety of sources, including electricity production (both through emissions affecting air quality and leaching of heavy metals and other contaminants into groundwater from coal mining operations), other mining and industry (which dumps lead and other heavy metals into the soil, water, and air), leaded gas vehicles, and unregulated or illegal solid waste removal.

Coal-fired power plant Kosovo A is the most polluting power plant in Europe. All the rivers in Kosovo are classified as polluted – with high levels of both bacteriological matter and heavy metals – and other levels of contamination are several times higher than safe limits. While access to piped water in Kosovo is high – almost 98% of households have access – there is no municipal wastewater treatment and very low access to other sanitation services, like solid waste disposal.

Kosovo has made significant policy reforms to align with EU standards, but without significant investment in implementing environmental legislation and regulating the variety of environmental emissions, Kosovo is unlikely to meet the requirements for EU accession.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of concrete and comparable data on health outcomes in Kosovo, in part because Kosovo is not included in WHO Global Burden of Disease statistics. While we know a fair amount about the levels of contamination present in Kosovo, there is little information about the effect of these contaminants on productivity.

Forty percent of respiratory incidents (both due to disbursed and point source emissions) that require hospital visits are from the working-age population, but without international comparison, it's hard to know if that is a high number.

Women's groups noted in consultations the lack of access to quality healthcare as a critical concern, in part due to gender-specific impacts on health outcomes but also due to the increased burden of care that health issues impose upon them.

Firms have not complained about health preventing people from working, but have complained about the cost of water and are required in some cases to do their own wastewater treatment, and some have reported digging their own wells to get around those costs.

While contamination does not seem to be affecting farmers and other producers now (for instance, no one reported difficulty in meeting phyto-sanitary requirements in exporting agricultural goods to Europe), it is possible that without investment to stem the flow of contaminants into the environment, this could change in the future.

Levels of contamination are clearly high, but it is difficult at this point to rule environmental/health definitely or definitely not a binding constraint to growth and investment.

*Following review of the binding constraints, the team will undertake an analysis of the root causes of the binding constraints. During the Root Cause Analysis, the teams will interview stakeholders and conduct a series of workshops designed to clarify the underlying issues or central problems in each of the constraint areas. Following the initial, broad root cause analysis process, the Kosovo compact development team will make decisions about a number of constraint areas on which to focus the further development of its proposed compact program. This analytical work will culminate in a clear definition of the central problem, the underlying root causes of that problem, and identification of further questions that need to be answered in due diligence and design – the critical components of Concept Notes.*

# GOOD KOSOVO |

## 5 Wineries Putting Kosovo on the Map

**Bridget Nurre Jennions**

The fall sun glints off my glass as I follow the instructions to examine the “legs” on this particular Cabernet Sauvignon. Through the glass, I can see not only the wine’s viscosity but also the rolling vineyards in the distance and legion of wine tasters milling from booth to booth. Behind me, I can hear a guitar tuning in preparation for the evening’s entertainment. When my gaze lands back on the bottle before me, with Albanian script, I’m reminded that I am not at a wine festival in Napa, but rather the 15th annual Hardh Fest in Rahovec, Kosovo.

Kosovo, located on the Balkan Peninsula in Southeastern Europe, has a storied wine tradition that dates back centuries. The tombstone of an Illyrian soldier from 28 B.C. covered in grape carvings is proudly displayed at the Rahovec sufi tekke (or lodge) as evidence of the region’s historic connection to the potent beverage.

At its peak in 1989, Kosovo boasted 9,000 hectares of vineyards and a major export business (40 million liters that year to Germany alone). Like many industries here, wine production suffered through the 1990s, but was revitalized by a symposium held in Rahovec in 1997 that initiated an annual festival to celebrate the grape harvest and the region’s wine producers.

Today, the country has some 3,000 hectares of vineyards and 15 wineries that range in size from formerly state-owned behemoths to small family wineries. Even if you are able to be in Kosovo for the September harvest festival, make sure you indulge in some of the country’s famed hospitality with a visit to these five standout wineries when you treat yourself with a visit to this unheralded corner of Europe.

## 3 Decani Monastery and Velika Hoca

Just outside of Rahovec is the scenic Serbian village of Velika Hoca, known for having 13 churches for its 120 residents, and as the place where the monks of western Kosovo's Decani Monastery have been producing wine since the 15th century. For the past 15 years, Father Marko Diklic has regularly made the 30-mile trek to tend the vineyards and ferment wine for sale at the monastery and select locations in northern Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia. The monks keep it simple—making red wine and white wine—but it offers some of the purest flavor you will find in Kosovo. While the winery doesn't accept regular visitors, neighboring Petrovic Winery is a great alternative if you are in

the area. If you are lucky, owner Srdjan Petrovic will show you the license his ancestors procured to re-start wine production, after 500 years of Ottoman rule, in the early 20th century.

## 2 Daka Winery

Gazmend Daka's earliest memories are of his father, Gani, walking door to door selling grape brandy, or rakija. "We learned early that you never waste a grape," he laughs. Gazmend carried on his father's tradition by registering the family winery in 2008 and expanding production. Gani's image still adorns each bottle. While the family's production is still relatively small (about 35,000 liters per year), their wine regularly finishes among the top three selected at each year's Hardh Fest. This year's Cabernet Sauvignon placed second and has inspired Gazmend to attempt to barrel-age his wine for the first time. If you stop by this cozy winery (email first: [tourism.rahovec@gmail.com](mailto:tourism.rahovec@gmail.com)), be sure to try their best-selling Vranac: a rich, fruity grape native to the Balkans.

## 5 Sefa Wine

Sefa Wine is a new boutique winery that has a refreshing take on what the Kosovo terroir has to offer. Named for their grandfather Sefa, who first started producing wine in 1917, brothers Blerim and Labinot Shulina launched the winery in 2011 and have since honed their craft in preparation for export. With a production of 60,000 liters per year, the brothers have first set their sights on neighboring Albania. The key to achieving premium wine quality, as winemaker Labinot will tell you, is tending to each vine by hand throughout their life cycle. The 2012 Kulla Sefa Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon are testament to that care.

## 4 Stone Castle

The region's other formerly state-owned winery, Stone Castle, is by far its largest, with a capacity to produce up to 30 million liters per year. Purchased in 2006 by two Albanian-American businessmen, Stone Castle maintains 600 hectares of its own vineyards, but also plays a significant role in supporting the local economy by purchasing from the area's farmers. The tasting takes place in the winery's impressive storage vault, where you will sip a recent vintage surrounded by massive oak barrels aging 50-million liters of wine and brandy. The winery's grizzled yet charming winemaker will single out the ladies in your group to taste the refreshing Rosé, but don't leave without tasting Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, arguably Kosovo's best wine.

## 1 Bodrumi i Vjetër (Old Cellar)

One of the aforementioned behemoths, the aptly named Bodrumi i Vjetër (Albanian for "old cellar") is the country's oldest functioning wine cellar. Established by the Yugoslav government in 1953, the winery was privatized and sold to the local Hax-

hijaha family in 2006, who have since painstakingly restored its original stone structure. Though the building is now lined with stainless steel tanks, a tour deeper into the cellar reveals some of the wooden barrels still displaying their 1958 socialist enter-

prise emblem (now used for tourist intrigue, not for storing wine).

A pre-arranged tasting costs about \$10 to \$15 depending on the number of wines and amount of food desired. Make sure to try the award-winning 2014 Elephant Chardonnay, which comes with a light, crisp flavor and a great story: the Elephant line is named after a Bronze Age elephant figurine unearthed during the cellar's construction in 1950.



# we only have 3 questions for Millennium Challenge Kosovo Team

1. What did you do before joining the MCK?
2. What is the biggest challenge you think Kosovo's economy faces?
3. What are you reading right now?



**Petrit Selimi**  
National Coordinator

**1** I served as country's acting foreign minister and deputy foreign minister for over 6 years. I was an active member of civil society and served on boards of several independent media outlets and philanthropies. I also worked as a consultant and actor in private sector development and investment promotion, advising even NASDAQ-listed companies on opportunities in Kosovo. Bit of politics, bit of public relations and bit of passion for civil engagement and culture. That would be in short.

**2** Our Achilles heel is youth unemployment. We are lucky that we have a young population and a demographic dividend. We had relatively high growth if you remember that our country was borne just months before collapse of Lehman Brothers. But growth and noticeable development have not spurred youth employment. Populism, nationalism and other dangerous isms plaguing the world, hence employment is of critical importance.

**3** Usually read several books in parallel. I am currently half-way into the latest novel by Dave Eggers "Heroes of the Frontier". I am also binge-reading the "Injustice: Gods among us", a comic strip series that I recently discovered where the superheroes are at odds with each other. Yet, lets be honest, the time we have to read is mostly used on following US elections from every angle and each corner.



**Violeta Rexha**  
Gender Expert and Social Inclusion

**1** I am gender expert with diploma from the Law Faculty in Pristina, and a vast experience in working with gender

issues and human rights in general and more specifically on women's rights. My experience in human rights was gained working in the Ombudsperson office and this was furthered in the EULEX mission in Kosovo, where I have been working as a Gender Advisor. As part of my extensive work in the area of gender equality and human rights, I have provided expert advice on many occasions to the organizations in which I have worked, and also to the Kosovo institutions.

**2** The biggest Kosovo challenge in economic development is how to transform its advantages of human resources and natural resources into a sustainable development. The deficiencies of the rule of law and the high rate of unemployment, especially among women and youth are some of the barriers which hamper Kosovo's economic development.

**3** I am currently reading "Women, work and the will to lead" - a book from Sheryl Sandberg.



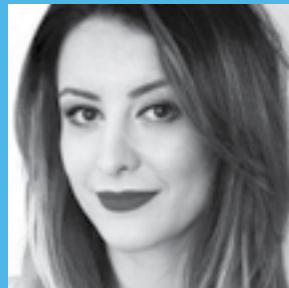
**Alban Zogaj**  
Chief Economist

**1** I have joined Riinvest Institute as a researcher in 2005, later promoted to a senior researcher and research director. I have earned my Bachelor Degree in Economics from the University of Prishtina, continuing with Master studies in Economics for Business Analysis at Staffordshire University, UK. I have recently completed my PhD in Economics at Universita Politecnica delle Marche, Italy. I was engaged as a project manager in various projects and policy analysis at the Riinvest Institute. Since 2007, I am also engaged as a lecturer of Economics at Riinvest College and Staffordshire University programs in Prishtina.

**2** To my opinion, one of the biggest challenges Kosovo's economy faces is becoming more competitive, in regional and global terms. To meet the challenge of enhancing competitiveness, our economy must use more resources and in better ways. Therefore, it must

enhance the utilisation of its capital, natural resources and labor force, by increasing employment rates which is still at a very low rate.

**3** The latest book I am reading is "Economics Rules: the rights and wrongs of the dismal science" written by a well-known economist Dani Rodrik.



**Edona Kurtolli Alija**  
Private Sector Development Specialist

**1** With over 10 years of international work experience, I have worked for private and donor funded projects mostly in private sector development. In Kosovo I have worked for Swiss government funded projects at Swisscontact, Riinvest Institute, UNDP and other organizations. I have also worked in New York City at startup tech companies, and I call NYC my home. I have also worked in Paris with Alcatel-Lucent. I have an MBA degree from the Ecole Supérieure Libre des Sciences Commerciales Appliquées ESLSCA in Paris, France, and a BA from Schiller International University. I also lecture at Riinvest College and Staffordshire University studies in Kosovo.

**2** I believe the most challenging parts of the job will also be the most thrilling part. The first few weeks will probably involve lots of reading, listen and each task needs to be approached correctly. One of the hard aspects will probably be achieving clarity of business objectives, scope, and communicating the same message to stakeholders. As a US citizen, it is a very special feeling, and a great honor to be working at MCK, and as a Kosovar, I am proud to say that Kosovo is now part of such an important venture.

**3** I frequently re-reading parts of "The Republic" of Plato, and I started reading "The things they carried" by Tim O'Brien. I am a big fan of classics and frequently re-read parts of books.



**Burim Hashani**  
Energy Sector Specialist

**1** I had just completed a Msc degree in Energy and Environment, when I started working as a technical and business advisor for the Government of Kosovo in managing the Electricity Distribution and Supply Company privatization process. Following project completion, I was responsible for managing the post privatization phase where we successfully achieved a smooth transition from public to private ownership, while overseeing transformational investments in the electricity sector.

**2** I believe that the biggest challenges Kosovo's economy faces are related to having infrastructural reforms which would result in securing 24/7 access to electricity and water, reducing the levels of informal economy and ensuring just governance and rule of law which would directly impact investors' confidence in the country.

**3** I am currently reading the 2013 mystery thriller novel "Inferno" written by American author Dan Brown.



**Rina Meta**  
Outreach Specialist

**1** Started writing and publishing when I was 17. Continued writing and medially covering culture since then. I've studied Mass Communication and later Product Design in Kosovo, Italy and Thailand. I worked for the regional New Moment Advertising Agency, a great opportunity to experience and understand regional mindsets. Recently I worked as a consultant for Brit-

ish Council and Kosovo Foreign Ministry on public and cultural diplomacy projects, including several big communication campaigns.

**2** What is the biggest challenge you think Kosovo's economy faces?

My family has a business in the SME-sector and I worked in media and private communication companies, so I had extensive interaction with unhappy employers, facing lack of skills for the labor force, complaining of infrastructure and energy reliability. They also complain of lack of financing and high interest rates in the banks. So I think these are some of the biggest constrains: access to finance, energy, education.

**3** I'm enjoying Agents of Empire from Noel Malcolm who uses his curiosity for Antonio Bruni, a particular character from the old Ulcinj of today's Montenegro, to illuminate the entire 16th century.



**Kastriot Orana**  
Executive Office Manager

**1** I worked as an assistant to the Deputy Foreign Minister and later became Chief of Staff of the Foreign Minister. It was fascinating experience and helped me understand multilateral interaction as now I am the office manager for the Millennium Challenge Kosovo.

**2** High interest rates and conservative lending with banks is one problem. Collateral is too high and banks are too profitable. I also think we need to somehow create more jobs in the private sector and bring more FDI to create these jobs. I studied in University of Prishtina and I was a member of Kosovo's national team in table tennis. I quit the professional career due to knee injury but I'm still active by helping Kosovo's Table Tennis Association with international relations.

**3** "Power of Habit" by Charles Duhigg. I think Kosovo can also change a lot if we manage to change some old patterns of thinking and some damaging habits.