

Youth Partnership

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CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI

KOSOVO* CHAPTER VII HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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* All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Contents

7.1 General context	3
7.2 Administration and governance	6
7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activities.....	8
7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition	13
7.5 Mental health	18
7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks	20
7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly.....	21
7.8 Current debates and reforms.....	21
REFERENCES.....	22

7.1. General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

Kosovo is Europe's youngest country in terms of history and demographics. It is a lower-middle-income country which, despite positive growth since the end of the war in 1999, remains one of the poorest countries in Europe (see: [World Bank](#)). Based on [Kosovo Agency of Statistics](#) (KAS) data, the resident population is approximately 1.79 million. Even though Kosovo has a young population, the death rate is almost half of the European average, accompanied by a low life expectancy of 72 years for females and 68 years for males.¹

Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe, with 53% under the age of 25.² In this regard, youth represent Kosovo's largest population group, with over 35% of the inhabitants being between 15 and 24, while a total of over 65% are under 30. Some 70% of the active youth are unemployed, and only a limited number of them study at a university (see: [State Portal of Republic of Kosovo](#)).

During the war of 1998-1999 in Kosovo, the health system was severely damaged. After the war, a reorganisation of the public healthcare sector and a series of reforms took place and significantly improved the system of public healthcare. The current healthcare reforms started in 2010 and have been based on four main pillars. The first pillar introduces universal health insurance with all the necessary organisational structures. The second one introduces the Kosovo Hospital and University Clinical Services (KHUCS) as a co-ordinating body for the delivery of healthcare services in healthcare institutions. Meanwhile, the final two pillars have led to the change of the role of the Ministry of Health (MoH) from an administrative one to a strategic one and have made the latter responsible for establishing the chambers (or associations) for key groups of health professionals.

The Government of Kosovo is the owner of all public health institutions. The organisational structure of the healthcare system consists of both the public healthcare network and the facilities that are owned by private parties. Public healthcare institutions are organised into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary.

In 2014, healthcare was recognised as a priority sector with the aim to modernize the healthcare system. Although the total healthcare expenditure has risen in absolute terms in recent decades, the percentage of state budget has consistently fallen compared to GDP and levels of private health expenditure remain high. Specifically, in 2013 the total health expenditure in Kosovo was estimated to be at 6.6% of GDP, the expenditure on health for the public sector were only 2.7% while 3.9% was out-of-pocket expenditure in the private

1. Osmani Ademi, A, Health Care Reform in Kosovo, Eurohealth SYSTEMS AND POLICIES Journal, and Eurohealth incorporating Euro Observer— Vol.23 | No.1 | 2017, available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332655>, p.20, accessed 2 November 2021.

2. EU Assistance to Kosovo; Education for the Future, available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/kosovo/documents/press_corner/education_for_the_future_en.pdf, accessed 3 November 2021.

sector.³ Furthermore, in 2021, there remains a high reliance on private out-of-pocket expenditures which are estimated at 40% of total medical costs. Only 65% of annual public healthcare needs are covered by public expenditure, mostly on fixed costs, and this has significantly limited the access to public healthcare services for vulnerable groups. According to [Eurostat “Enlargement countries – health statistics”](#), Kosovo public expenditure on healthcare was 3.5 % of GDP in 2019. Compared with the public expenditure on healthcare in the EU, the difference is considerable, as the latter spends 7.9 % of GDP. The European Commission (EC) [Kosovo Report for 2021](#) underlines that, while there was some progress on access to health services, the quality of healthcare remains a concern. The overall 2021 budget for the health sector was increased by 10%, compared to 2020. Despite this increase, the overall share of health expenditures is at around 3% of GDP. During 2021, Kosovo became an observer country in the EU Health Security Committee. According to the EC report 2021, around a fifth of the population has very limited access to healthcare services. Access to basic healthcare is free but spending on diagnostic services and medications is not reimbursed. Data on health conditions of young people are not systematically collected. It is important to mention that there are no complex healthcare studies specifically targeting the youth.

When considering the level of tobacco use in Kosovo, it seems to be in decline among the student population. The results of the Comprehensive Survey on Smoking among young people in [Kosovo – GYTS](#)⁴ II, conducted during 2016 by [the National Institute of Public Health](#) (NIPH) and supported by the [World Health Organization](#) and the Centers for Disease Control from the US, show that, compared to the first survey conducted in 2004 (GYTS I), tobacco consumption among young people aged 13 to 15 dropped from 6.7% in 2004 to 4.4% in 2016, while passive smoking rose by 84%. Meanwhile, 94.3% of students in this age group were in favor of banning smoking indoors.

With little differences, the same tendency is confirmed by the results of [Youth Study Kosovo 2018/2019](#). According to this study, the behaviour of young people with regard to smoking cigarettes has not changed since 2012, as 71% of young people still do not smoke. According to the study, 19% of males appear to be regular smokers, whereas only 7% of females smoke on a regular basis. Regarding the behaviour of alcohol use, it has not changed in the last six years, since the survey results show once again that 73% of young people in Kosovo do not drink alcohol.⁵

3. Ibid

4. GYTS is a global standard for systematic monitoring of tobacco use among young people and to track key tobacco control indicators. GTYS (Global Youth Tobacco Survey) Fact Sheet Kosovo 2016, available at: [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/ncds/ncd-surveillance/data-reporting/kosovo/kosovo-gyts-2016-factsheet-\(ages-13-15\)_508tag.pdf?sfvrsn=8aee777_1&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/ncds/ncd-surveillance/data-reporting/kosovo/kosovo-gyts-2016-factsheet-(ages-13-15)_508tag.pdf?sfvrsn=8aee777_1&download=true), accessed 3 November 2021.

5. Rrumbullaku, O. Youth Study Kosovo 2018/2019, The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15264.pdf>, accessed 3 November 2021.

On the other hand, drug use appears to be a problem among adolescents in Kosovo. According to European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2014), around 7% of 15-16-year-old respondents to a 2012 survey reported use of an illicit drug in the past (lifetime prevalence). Cannabis was the most frequently reported illicit substance, with a lifetime prevalence rate of 2.4%, followed by cocaine at 1% and amphetamines at 0.7%. Around 2% of students reported cannabis use in the past 12 months, and 0.4% in the past 30 days. Boys (4%) were more likely than girls (1%) to have used any illicit substances.⁶

According to NIPH, during the 1986-2015 period, there were 100 cases of HIV and AIDS registered, with 41 deaths. Of these 100, 54 were AIDS cases and 46 were cases of HIV. During 2015, only two cases were reported, one of them with AIDS and the other one with HIV. If we compare these data with the incidence of HIV in the European region, we can see that the infection rate in Kosovo is lower than the average prevalence in the region, where HIV prevalence is 6.2%. Currently, the prevalence of HIV in Kosovo is low, while the degree of infection of less than 1% in the general population and less than 5% in all groups at risk of infection with HIV.⁷

Main concept

There is wide recognition that there is no single definition of health. However, health can be described as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” ([WHO 1946](#))

Healthcare is defined as the measures and activities undertaken by organisations, institutions and health professionals with the primary purpose to improve the health of the citizens and residents (see: [Law No. 04/L-125 ON HEALTH](#)). On the other hand, well-being is another complex concept in which different dimensions interact with each other. Young people confront problems in a number of areas affecting their well-being and deprivations may reinforce each other, further complicating the provision of appropriate and effective solutions. The concept of “Health-Promoting Schools” describes the need to achieve a healthy lifestyle for the entire population and the school environment by creating a supportive environment that will result in the promotion of health. This concept creates an opportunity, but also requires a pledge of commitment, preparation, health improvement and a social and adequate physical environment. Young people represent the focus of schools that promote health (see: [Strategy for Health-promoting schools in Kosovo 2009 – 2018](#))

6. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, National Report (2012 Data) to the EMCDDA: “Kosovo”: new developments, trends and in-depth information on selected issues, 2014, available at: www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/847/National_Report_Kosovo_2014_EN_483865.pdf, accessed 3 November 2021.

7. Health sector strategy (2017-2021), available at: www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/Strategjia_sektoriale_e_shendetesise_finalmentor_2016_ENG.pdf, p.23, accessed 3 November 2021.

7.2. Administration and governance

Governance

In Kosovo, healthcare and well-being services are divided between several sectors and ministries. At the central level, the main institutional actors in charge of youth healthcare are [the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports](#), [the Ministry of Health](#) and [the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation](#).

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) is the central authority in charge of youth policies. Within the ministry, at the central level, the Department of Youth holds overall responsibility for the youth sector in Kosovo. To ensure a healthy and safe environment for Kosovo youth, DfY already has in place three sets of measures, which are divided into: a- care for achieving a healthy youth environment; b- care for achieving a higher level of security for Kosovo youth; c- supporting activities that affect their social and cultural integration. The Department of Sport is responsible for the preparation, evaluation and approval of sports programme policies, which are in charge of the qualitative development of different sports.

The Ministry of Health is the main authority responsible for ensuring full access to healthcare at all levels and for all citizens. Within the Ministry of Health, [the National Institute of Public Health](#) is the highest health, professional and scientific institution of Kosovo which organises, develops, supervises and implements public healthcare policies.

Meanwhile, the [National Institute of Public Health](#) plans, programmes and evaluates health policies, prepares and implements the public healthcare strategy (Hygienic-sanitary measures, prophylactic-counter-epidemic measures, social-medical, health promotion, health education, water and food quality control, PZI (extended immunisation programme), healthcare policy and health economics, health information).

NIPH covers the entire territory of Kosovo through its branches – the Institutes of Public Health (IPH) located in the regional centres Peja, Prizren, Mitrovica, Gjilan, Gjakova and Ferizaj.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation is the institution in charge of preparing public policies, drafting legal acts, drafting and adopting sub-legal acts and determining the mandatory standards in the field of development of early childhood education, pre-university education, higher education, science, technology and innovation in Kosovo ([Regulation \(GRK\) – No. 05/2020](#)).

The governance approach to youth health and well-being is of a top-down format for policy development and partly top-down in implementation. Healthcare is provided free of charge by the public health institutions for special groups of people, such as:

- children and young people less than 15 years of age;

- pupils and students until the end of regular education;
- citizens over 65 years of age;
- citizens, close family members of martyrs, invalids of war and other invalids, their close family members;
- recipients of social assistance schemes and their close family members;
- people with disabilities ([State Portal Kosovo](#)).

Besides the institutions listed above, numerous other governmental bodies, offices, state institutes and agencies, in addition to educational institutions, regional and local self-administration bodies and other actors, have a significant role in the field of youth health and well-being in Kosovo. At the local level, all municipalities play an important role in the implementation of primary healthcare. Primary services are provided by the municipal administrative units through Family Health Centres. Health institutions subordinated to local authorities, family doctors and authorised NGOs directly provide health assistance and counselling to young people ([portal.cor.europa.eu](#)).

Cross-sectoral co-operation

Public administration institutions co-operate with each other according to [Law No. 06/L – 113](#) “On Organisation and Functioning of State Administration and Independent Agencies” (Article 36) by:

1. providing data, information and necessary support for performing their functions;
2. establishing joint working groups for the development of strategies, policies, studies or special draft acts for administration and implementation of Government projects;
3. establishing joint units to perform administrative tasks, with the participation of several institutions or foreseen by agreements for such services.

Cross-sectional co-operation in the health sector is defined by constant information exchange and inclusion of many authority bodies that depend on the topics and area of health protection of youth in Kosovo. The abovementioned governmental and many other institutions are involved in the processes of decision making, drafting the legislative framework and its implementation.

Inter and cross sectoral co-operation in the health system imply the activities within a legal framework composed of important strategic documents by creating the political direction of public policies development which, among others, include youth health.

The most important documents include [Law no.03/L145, for the Empowerment and Participation of Youth](#), which aims to strengthen the participation of youth in decision-making processes in order to improve their quality of life and social status; [Law No. 02/L-78 On Public Health](#), which is more specific regarding the health and well-being of youth by having a pillar on youth healthcare. Law No. 04/L-125 ON HEALTH, which aims to establish

legal grounds for the protection and improvement of the health of the citizens of Kosovo through health promotion, preventive activities and provision of comprehensive and quality healthcare services.

According to Article 34 of this law, the purpose of healthcare for young people is to promote their harmonic physical and mental development through:

- a) health education;
- b) systematic health control based on their age;
- c) obligatory vaccine based on medical protocol according to their age and realisation of studies on vaccine effectiveness and conducting vaccine campaigns;
- d) providing instructions to professional staff.

Another important strategic document is the [Strategy for health-promoting schools in Kosovo 2009-2018](#), which was adopted in 2009. The strategy was a result of an interministerial committee composed of members of the Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. The purpose of the strategy is to achieve a healthy way of living for the entire school population and community as a whole. The promotion of health in schools is known as a set of programmes in leading to improvement, advancement and preservation of health, but also timely identification and treatment of diseases or deviations that cause damage to the health of participants in the education process.

7.3. Sport, youth fitness and physical activities

National strategy(ies)

In Kosovo, sport is regulated as an activity by [Law No.04/L-075](#) amending and supplementing [Law No. 2003/24 On Sport](#). Article 2 states that “all persons regardless of their age, gender, nationality, political affiliation, religion, physical abilities, the social and economic level have the right of participating in the physical-sportive activities”. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, is responsible for government policies related to sports.

Article 5 of the amended law defines that: “Sports activity is composed by education and sports activities, oriented towards achieving results in sports competitions”, in addition to:

- physical activities on body development and games of all group ages;
- sports recreation;
- therapeutic sports;
- activities of professional persons who prepare athletes for sports events;
- activities of persons who take part in the organisation and the management of sport competitions and other sports events.

A dedicated strategy on youth sport, fitness and physical activity as such does not exist in Kosovo.

[The Youth Strategy 2019-2023](#), including its action plan, is a comprehensive strategy of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports for young people. It aims to improve the situation of younger's aged 15 to 24, including all parties of interest from the governmental and non-governmental sectors. Its strategic objectives are mobilisation of youth for participation, representation and active citizenship, providing skills and preparing youth for the labour market, and a healthy and safe environment for young people.

A [Strategic Plan for Sport in the Republic of Kosovo 2017-2021](#)⁸ was launched during a public debate in 2016, but it was not adopted as an official document in 2017 nor since then. It remains a guideline document, although not officially approved by the government. This plan has been drafted by the Ministry for Sport in co-operation with the Kosovo Olympic Committee, sports federations and other competent institutions. According to this document, sport is very important for Kosovo, especially since the country has a very young population. Despite this fact, the document reveals that less than 5% of the population is engaged in sports clubs, which is much greater than other EU countries and Kosovo's neighbours. Kosovo lacks the infrastructure to ensure regular engagement of the population in sports.

Main elements and key objectives

Specific objectives of the Youth Strategy 2019-2023 in the area of youth sport are:

- providing support for the construction and rehabilitation of youth centres, including the construction and rehabilitation of recreational and sports grounds for the development of youth social activities;
- integrating young people into social life through various cultural, sports and recreational activities;
- supporting youth in national and international initiatives in the fields of sports and culture.

In the Strategic Plan for Sport 2017-2021, five strategic objectives are outlined:

1. modernisation of sports infrastructure according to international standards;
2. sport for all;
3. support and development of quality sports;
4. education and professional capacity building;
5. defining the mechanisms of co-operation between the central government and central and local stakeholders for sports.

8. The document is available only in Albanian.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

Physical, recreational and sports activities are considered measures of particular importance for a healthy development of youth in the Youth Strategy 2019-2023. The third pillar of the youth strategy provides a general framework for the promotion and support of sport and physical activity. Starting from 2019, under the realisation of objective 3.3 “Integrating young people into social life through various cultural, sports and recreational activities”, the Division for Prevention and Social Integration is the body responsible for the integration of young people into social life through various cultural, sporting and recreational activities. For this purpose, it is expected that up to 20 projects must be financially supported and around 2 000 young people will benefit annually. For the entire period of the strategy 2019-2023, the financial support for the realisation of this objective is €195 000.

At the local level, each municipality in Kosovo has a directory dedicated to Sports. This structure is responsible for and carries out planned activities in the sports sector, based on local resources. This directorate co-operates with the respective ministry for the realisation of projects in the field of sports.

The [Sport4Youth project](#)⁹ has been implemented by PL4Y International Kosovo since 2008. PL4Y International (PI) has been training young Kosovo citizens (aged 15-20) to become sports facilitators and to organise socio-educative sport activities for children (6-12 years old) within their localities. In each locality, PI establishes a team of volunteers (an average of five), who are divided into three positions: leader, animators and assistants. In 2015, four types of activities were implemented in the Sport4Youth framework:

- (a) trainings for volunteers;
- (b) regular sport and educational activities for children;
- (c) multi-ethnic events for children and volunteers;
- (d) animation of the network.

The trained animators were able to implement a total of 4 189 regular sport and awareness-raising activities for the children of their localities. Animators implemented these activities with the support of the assistants and under the guidance of the leaders. In total, over 10 000 children (in terms of participation) benefitted from the activities implemented in the 14 localities, including 45% of girls and 7 communities (namely, Albanian, Serbian, Roma and Travellers,¹⁰ Ashkali, Bosniak, Turk and Gorani).

9. PL4Y INTERNATIONAL, “SPORT4YOUTH, Final Project Evaluation”, 2015, available at: <http://www.icsspe.org/system/files/PLAY%20International%20-%20S4Y%20Final%20Evaluation%202015.pdf>, accessed 3 November 2021.

10. The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

In 2015, a study on “Sport4All”, published by PL4Y International, analysed the level of development in the field of non-competitive sports in Kosovo. The study highlights the fact that policies in the field of sports mainly support elite sports, while access to recreational sports remains very low for the rest of the population. This is evident even in the expenditures of the budget related to sport activities. Subsequently, in 2013 the Sport Department supported the sports institutions by implementing a total of 364 projects as part of its objectives and in line with the programme policies with a total budget of €1 415 794.59. A survey conducted by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics in 2013 showed that there were 36 sports federations in Kosovo, with 16 937 athletes and more than 1 200 active sports clubs that participate in regular championships.

In 2014, in the framework of eight programming policies, 490 projects were realised by supporting sport activities of the Kosovo Olympic Committee, Sports Federation and clubs. Around 70% of the budget was given to support activities outside the country for official meetings (lobbying for recognition by international mechanisms), capacity building in advanced training, official tournaments of different ages, preparations for joint camps abroad, to official Balkan, European and world championships. During 2015, the focus of the financial support was the financing of all Sports Federation and Kosovo Olympic Committee on their membership as well as the participation of athletes in international competitions (see: [A Strategic Plan for Sport in the Republic of Kosovo 2017-2021](#)). Moreover, the study “Sport4All” reveals that in Kosovo, the role of sport as a tool for education and social change remains underestimated. Concrete actions can be taken to actively promote better inclusion of minority communities, people with disabilities and girls and women within Kosovo society through sports.

In November 2016, the Ranillug municipality and the [USAID Advancing Kosovo Together](#) programme joined forces to rehabilitate the sports field, where around 200 schoolchildren were engaged in sports on daily basis. Sport is one of the most powerful tools for breaking down barriers and helping children make new friends, have fun, and learn to work well in a team, while promoting good health through exercise. The best place for children to enjoy outdoor sports is on school grounds that are safe and easily accessible.

[The European Week of Sport](#) was launched in 2015 to raise awareness of the important role an active lifestyle has for everyone. The week aims to give people a strong incentive to be active. Since 2018, the initiative has included partners from the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries and regions. For the first time, in 2018, the European Week of Sports was organised in Kosovo from 23 to 30 September and since then, the activity has been held every year in the same period. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports has established the National Co-ordinating Body for the organisation and performance of the European Week of Sport. In the framework of this initiative, various sports activities of a competitive and physical nature and scientific conferences and seminars are organised with a focus on sport education, promotion and healthy life.

Physical education in schools

In Kosovo, physical education is a mandatory subject in the [education curricula](#) framework from the 1st to 12th grade at the national level. Up to two hours per week are included in the curricula and the content of the courses in the primary school generally consist of 50% games, 50% athletics and gymnastics. In secondary school, the number of games decreases and the content is more oriented towards sport techniques. In high school, sport theory is taught as an addition to techniques.¹¹ Since 2009, the Department of Sports, part of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, has drafted the programme policy to support sports in school and university. The main purposes of this programme policy are participation by and identification of new talents and their professional orientation.¹² In 2013, Kosovo had 1 865 physical education teachers working in pre-university education, 1 280 schools and 360 sport clubs.¹³

In the framework of the law on sport, there is a dedicated section (No. XI) on sports and physical education in schools and university.

Specifically, Article 52 of this law defines the reasons for including physical education and sport in schools and universities, namely:

- to develop activities on physical education and sports aiming to improve health and physical conditions as well as psychomotor abilities;
- to strengthen resistance against passivity and apathy of pupils and students on intellectual, emotional, motor abilities and social aspects;
- to orient pupils and students according to their abilities;
- to forbid smoking, alcohol, drugs, and to decrease conflicts in the macro- and microenvironment;
- to coordinate cooperation of physical education and sports activity in schools and university, to encourage talented pupils and students to find their desires and capability for certain sports;
- to increase the number of different school and university teams according to sport disciplines, which are approved according to the schools and university rules.

11. Hergüner G. (2016) The Comparison of Physical Education and Sports Lessons Applied in Education Systems of Turkey and Kosovo, *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 4(9): 1985-1993, available at: DOI: 10.13189/ujer.2016.040908, accessed 6 November 2021.

12. Program Policy No.10, Sports in school and university, Sports Department, MCYS, p.30-32 available in Albanian language, available at: <https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/politikat-e-sportit-mkrs.pdf>, accessed 6 November 2021.

13. Vehapi Shemsedin, The Sport Science Higher Education System in Kosovo, April 2014, available at: [https://tempus-speed.eu/images/dissemination/The%20Sport%20Science%20Higher%20Education%20System%20in%20Kosovo%20\(S%20Vehapi\).pdf](https://tempus-speed.eu/images/dissemination/The%20Sport%20Science%20Higher%20Education%20System%20in%20Kosovo%20(S%20Vehapi).pdf), accessed 6 November 2021.

Collaboration and partnerships

At the central level, according to Article 52.2 of the Law on Sport [the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports](#) in co-operation with [the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation](#) are in charge of following up on the development and physical education of sports in schools and universities.

There is no information regarding public funds available to support collaboration and the formation of partnerships.

7.4. Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

In Kosovo, there is no separate strategy related to healthy lifestyles and nutrition, but some issues are incorporated in the [Health Sector Strategy 2017-2020](#) and other relevant documents.

The mission of the strategy is “maintaining health, promoting healthy ways of living and providing qualitative, secure, easily accessible, equitable, without financial risk and cost-effective services”. The strategy itself sets out three objectives:

– Objective I: Maintenance and advancement of health;

➤ Specific Objective 1: Promotion of healthy lifestyle:

R 1.1. Action plan for education and health promotion implemented;

R 1.2. Project “Health promotion in schools” implemented;

➤ Specific Objective 2: Improve health of mother and child:

R 2.1. Action plan to improve health of mother and child implemented;

➤ Specific Objective 3: Reducing the incidence of infectious diseases:

R 3.1. Action Plan for HIV/AIDS implemented;

R 3.2. Tuberculosis Action Plan implemented;

R 3.3. Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance implemented;

R 3.4. Measures to prevent hospital infections implemented;

R 3.5. Strengthening the monitoring system of infectious diseases;

➤ Specific Objective 4: Prevention and control of chronic conditions (indicator: inclusion of 80% of students in lower secondary schools and higher education and health promotion about risk behaviours and risk factors);

R 4.1. Draft Strategy for the prevention and control of chronic non-communicable diseases;

➤ Specific Objective 5: Health Policies for all:

R 5.1. Strategy for mental health implemented;

R 5.2. Healthy Ageing Strategy implemented;

R 5.3. State Committee for environmental health functionalised;

R 5.4. Health of vulnerable groups improvement;

- Objective II: Ensuring sustainable financing of healthcare;
- Objective III: Reorganisation of the health sector.

According to the strategy, the general health situation of the population in Kosovo is considered good. Healthy living, satisfactory consumption of fruits, good physical activity and low risk factors related to alcohol use, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, combined with high rates of immunisation, result in a better health condition of the population in general. The process of promoting health in schools ensures that educational institutions take care of the physical and mental health and safety of all students and the entire educational process is supported in the form of partnerships with the family, the community and the participation of government and non-government bodies within the community.

The [Strategy for Health-promoting Schools \(HPS\) in Kosovo 2009-2018](#) was adopted in 2009. Kosovo is a member [of Schools for Health in Europe](#). The mission of this strategy is to provide a healthy and friendly school environment through health education, promotion of environmental protection and strengthening partnership within schools, parents and communities.

HPS's purpose and objectives are as follows:

- achieving a healthy way of living for the entire population of school and community as a whole;
- creating a healthy and stimulating environment for learning and teaching;
- building individual skills (strengths);
- strengthening co-operation between school and community;
- strengthening co-operation between different sectors, such as education, health, environment etc.;
- developing and implementing regulations and structures that support health practices within and outside school.

The process of health promotion in schools ensures that, the school takes care of the physical and mental health and safety of all participants and the whole educational process is supported in the form of partnerships with family, community and participation of government and non- governmental bodies within the community.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

Lifestyle includes health behaviours and habits such as diet, exercise, substance use and sexual behaviour. Individuals have a significant influence over their own lifestyle choices.

The way in which youth spend their free time can influence many aspects of their social activities. The generation aged 14 to 29 was born in the late 1980s and the 1990s and grew up in an era of rapid development of technology, the internet and devices. According to the [Youth Study Kosovo 2018/2019](#) financed by the Friedrich Erbert Stiftung, lifestyle depends on a person's attitudes, morality, values, preferences and opportunities. Leisure activities

constitute an important part of the well-being of young people, of their work, school, and family obligations and can reflect the true aspirations and passions of young people.

The [Strategy for Health-promoting Schools in Kosovo 2009-2018](#) has special topics in the field of health education, such as:

- awareness of the dangers of tobacco use, alcohol and drugs;
- protection from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases;
- sexual and reproductive health education;
- protection against abuse and sexual violence;
- nutrition and health and the role of sports activities;
- education on mine awareness.

The Department of Youth within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport is contributing actively on the establishment of qualitative activities within and outside schools in order to have an impact within communities that surround schools. One of the Department of Youth policy programmes is education and health promotion. Since the programme was established, many organisations and youth centres have been supported in implementing projects that promote the protection and preservation of youth health.

[The Youth Strategy 2019-2023](#), including its action plan, also covers healthy lifestyle and well-being of young people. Thus, Objective 3 and its sub-objectives emphasise the importance of promoting healthy lifestyles among young people, including healthy eating, mental health, prevention of psychological and physical violence, physical activities, etc.

The Department of Youth is in charge of supporting civil society organisations, especially youth organisations, with small grants on an annual basis, in two main components:

- supporting youth organisations through campaigns, trainings, workshops, debates and other activities in order for them to promote healthy lifestyles among young people, including healthy eating, mental health, prevention of psychic and physical violence, use of harmful substances, through engaging in physical activities. In this framework, around 20 youth organisations will receive grants of up to €3 000;
- promoting and raising youth awareness of health-threatening phenomena. In this framework, around 10 youth organisations will receive grants of up to €500 for joint organisation with DfY. Support will not only be limited to awareness of the importance of having a healthy environment, but also support young people attending conferences, workshops, training, seminars, camps and various national and international debates on youth health issues. This includes the promotion and awareness among young people about the preservation of reproductive health, their rights and obligations.

The Action Plan on Health Promotion and Education 2019-2021¹⁴ aims to promote a healthy lifestyle and create habits that affect the maintenance and improvement of citizens' health. Specific objectives of the action plan are:

1. continuous development of cross-sectoral co-operation;
2. involvement of the community in health promotion and education;
3. training of health and non-health professionals for health promotion and education;
4. health education for patients and families;
5. development of appropriate media platforms for health promotion and education.

According to the [European Commission \(EC\) 2018 Report on Kosovo](#) on nutrition and physical activity, there is no legislation in place in this regard. The situation remains the same in 2021 and “Kosovo has not made any progress in adopting the nutrition action plan on nutrition and physical activity”, confirms the [EC 2021 Report on Kosovo](#).

Since 2016, Save the Children Kosovo has been working in partnership with local partners, such as the Ministry of Health, municipal Departments of Health, Education and Social Welfare, schools, kindergartens, parents and children themselves, in the framework of a [health and nutrition programme](#). The overall goal of this programme is to improve children's health, development outcomes and care-giving practices for young children (aged 0-6) through increased access to essential health and pre-school education services, early childhood development programmes and better parental engagement and support.

In 2017, through [UNICEF Innovations Lab's UPSHIFT](#): Social Impact Workshop, four students in psychology studies from the University of Pristina launched a mobile application to promote sexual education of adolescents and youth in Kosovo: [Shnet](#) (“health”). One of the application's unique features is that it is the first one made entirely available in Albanian and Serbian – the two official languages in Kosovo – making relevant information available to the most marginalised groups of adolescents and youth. Between 2017 and 2021, more than 1 000 users installed the application. Through this application, users have the opportunity to further increase their knowledge regarding comprehensive sexual education and matters related to the topic.

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

In Kosovo, children in the 6th grade (age 12) start to learn about the biological changes associated with puberty, but also about aspects related to awareness of the prevention of risks that may come from lack of information about relationships and sexual health. The purpose of sex education at this age is to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to

14. Action Plan on Health Promotion and Education 2019-2021, available in Albanian language, available at: <https://msh.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/PLANI-STRATEGJIK-P%C3%8BR-PROMOVIM-DHE-EDUKIM-SH%C3%8BNDËT%C3%8BSOR-2021.pdf>, accessed 6 November 2021.

protect personal health and the health of others, to promote healthy lifestyles, including awareness of potential abuse in biological, social and health contexts.¹⁵

Health promotion and education are implemented at all levels of healthcare in Kosovo, by professionals who in their job description have the improvement of health for all and the reduction of health inequalities.

Peer-to-peer education approaches

No information available

Collaboration and partnerships

No information available

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

Kosovo does not have a national health promotion strategy. There are no systematic means of counselling nor information campaigns related to raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and factors affecting the health and well-being of young people. Such initiatives are usually organised mainly by civil society organisations in collaboration with state institutions. Mainly, such events are funded by international donors like Save the Children, UNICEF, WHO, etc.

7.5. Mental health

National strategy(ies)

The crisis of 1999 led to the drafting of mental health reform. In the midst of this upheaval, mental health stakeholders became receptive to considering new approaches and, at the same time, external human and financial resources were made available.¹⁶ At that time, a mental health taskforce was created. The strategic plan on mental health, finalised in 2000 and officially approved in 2001, emphasised the strengthening of community-based mental health services at the same time as closing Kosovo's notorious asylum. The strategic plan served as the roadmap through which all actions could be co-ordinated until 2008, when the [Mental Health Strategy 2008-2013](#) was approved. Regarding the mental health services for

15. Strategic plan for mother, child health and reproductive health 2020-2021, November 2020, in Albanian language only, available at: <https://msh.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/PLANI-STRATEGJIK-P%C3%8BR-SH%C3%8BNDËTIN-E-N%C3%8BN%C3%8BS-F%C3%8BMIJ%C3%8BS-DHE-SH%C3%8BNDËTIN-RIPRODHUES.pdf>, accessed 9 November 2021.

16. A global community of mental health innovators; available at: www.mhinnovation.net/, accessed 9 November 2021.

children and adolescents within the Mental Health Strategy 2008-2013, the main objectives include:

- reducing the prevalence of adolescent children's health problems, especially for children at risk;
- identifying risk factors, such as violence, and reduce their consequences on the health of children and adolescents;
- providing consistent services so that all children and adolescents have access;
- ensuring the rights of children and adolescents to be informed about mental health, about protection from abuse or neglect, also about services legal protection;
- improving access to the prevention programme for all children and adolescents;
- increasing awareness of the importance of mental health, in mass population and the importance of mental health especially at this age group;
- building professional resources in the field of mental health for children and adolescents;
- increasing investments in the field of children's and adolescents' mental health.

Based on “Health sector strategy (2017-2021)” document, the Mental Health Strategy 2014-2020 is already in place.

Since 2015, Kosovo has had [Law No. 05/L-025 on Mental Health](#) in line with international and regional human rights instruments. Law No. 05/L-025 aims to protect and promote mental health, prevent the problems associated with it, guaranteeing rights and improving the quality of life for persons with mental disorders.

Mental health services within communities are organised at three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary.

- The primary-level services include family medicine centres.
- The secondary-level services include psychiatric wards at four regional hospitals, eight community-based mental health centres (CBMHC)/integration houses and one mental health unit for children and adolescents. The centre for integration and rehabilitation of chronic psychiatric patients in Shtime also is part of CBMHC.
- The tertiary-level services include a psychiatric clinic, intensive psychiatric care, an institute for forensic psychiatry, services for children and adolescents and substance abuse services.

Financing for mental health services comes from the budget line dedicated to mental health in the Ministry of Health budget. The budget dedicated to mental health in 2016 was €2 715 899 or 2% of GDP, which is very low compared to European countries where the dedicated budget represents 4% of GDP.¹⁷

17. Fanaj N, Mustafa. S. (2018) State of Mental Health Care Reform in Kosovo in light of new mental health interventions, 19th Congress EPA Section of Epidemiology and Social Psychiatry April 4-7, 2018 - Vienna, Austria available at:

Based on the [Health Sector Strategy 2017-2021](#), there are three broad strategic objectives regarding mental health in Kosovo:

- protection and improvement of health;
- ensuring sustainable health financing;
- reorganising the healthcare sector.

These objectives apply not only to physical but also to mental healthcare. Patients' satisfaction with health service was regarded as a very important indicator of the way services are provided, the healthcare environment and how healthcare professionals treat their patients.

Improving the mental health of young people

Based on Article 4 of Law No. 05/L-025, protection and promotion of mental health is carried out through measures that contribute to provision or restoring mental equilibrium of the individual, by strengthening individual capacities, promoting integrity, improving acceptance and fighting discrimination and stigma in their social environment.

7.6. Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

Policy framework

In the top-level policy framework, there are three main documents in place: Law No. 04/L-125 on Health, Law No. 02/L-78 on Public Health, and the Health Sector Strategy 2017-2021, where the framework of early detection and signposting of the population about health risks is defined.

According to the Health Sector Strategy (2017-2021), the Government of Kosovo, within its priority list of projects, has incorporated a project to strengthen the primary care infrastructure. The activity of primary healthcare includes health promotion, prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases, disorders and injuries, including dental care and minor surgeries based on the concept of family medicine. The public network of public health centres consists of a total of 429 institutions. Each municipality in Kosovo has a family medicine centre as the main unit, with its constituent units of family health centres and family health ambulances. Also, in the context of early detection Law No. 04/L-125 on Health, Article 12 provides for the following measures and actions:

- 1.1. preservation and promotion of a healthy lifestyle through health promotion and educational activities organised with the aim of raising citizens' and residents health culture;

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324683979_STATE_OF_MENTAL_HEALTH_CARE_REFORM_IN_KOSOVO_IN_LIGHT_OF_NEW_MENTAL_HEALTH_INTERVENTIONS, accessed 9 November 2021.

- 1.2. early detection of communicable diseases and elimination of their causes by changing conditions, which cause epidemics;
- 1.3. early detection of acute diseases and treatment of chronic mass non-contagious diseases, checked on the official medical register of patients, including relevant rehabilitation;
- 1.4. prevention and early detection of malignant diseases, particularly breast cancer, cervical cancer, and colorectal cancer;
- 1.5. prevention and early treatment of injuries in the workplace and occupational diseases;
- 1.6. prevention and early detection and treatment of drug addictions, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection;
- 1.7. provision of drugs, medical supplies and equipment;
- 1.8. treatment, rehabilitation and resocialisation of chronically mentally ill patients in the community;
- 1.9. treatment, psychosocial rehabilitation and resocialisation of people with special needs in the community;
- 1.10. provision of the necessary conditions for pregnant women, women after childbirth and healthy development of children and youth;
- 1.11. measures for prevention and elimination of health consequences caused by emergency conditions;
- 1.12. organisation of emergency healthcare services based on specific law;
- 1.13. implementation of a uniform system for data collection and health information;
- 1.14. organisation and implementation of professional and legal supervision;
- 1.15. implementation of activities related to voluntary blood collection;
- 1.16. taking measures related to protection against environmentally harmful agents: physical, chemical and biological;
- 1.17. prevention and early detection of congenital abnormalities;
- 1.18. prevention and early detection of cavities, oral diseases and facial abnormalities;
- 1.19. healthcare services of patronage at home for citizens and residents in need, especially for paralyzed persons.

Stakeholders

The main stakeholders for designating young people at risk are the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. At the public level, doctors and health practitioners are the main actors in charge for the mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks. Among these, the most important are family doctors, school doctors, and nurses. In education institutions, the main actors in charge of the mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks are teachers, psychologists, and social workers.

Guidance to stakeholders

No information available

Funding

Based on the Health Sector Strategy 2017-2021, the public healthcare institutions are funded by sources such as the Kosovo budget, off-budget funds from donors (direct support for projects) and contributions in the form of patient co-payments and payments for medicines and other healthcare products.

There are no data on specific activities dedicated to youth mental health.

7.7. Making health facilities more youth friendly

No top-level policies, programmes, projects or initiatives aiming to make health facilities more youth friendly have been implemented in Kosovo.

7.8. Current debates and reforms

[The Programme of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo 2021-2025](#) anticipates a new strategy for the healthcare sector. The aim of the new strategy is to review the legal framework of the health sector, with a special emphasis on the Law on Health, to undertake necessary reforms and follow contemporary developments. The vision of reforming the healthcare sector is to make palliative care functional and strengthen inspection and monitoring capacities. Special attention will be paid to the functionality of the unique and integrated health information system, which regulates the patient referral system at all levels of healthcare.

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