

Case Study

TRAFFICKING OF HUMAN BEINGS AND THE CAUSES OF THIS TRAFFICKING IN KOSOVO

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ABSTRACT

Background: Human trafficking is a highly harmful and disturbing crime affecting Kosovo and the broader region, posing a serious threat to human rights. The criminal occurrence of human trafficking is often associated with organised criminal groups that operate transnationally, making the combat of this criminal phenomenon a complex and urgent matter.

Methods: This research employs a literature review approach of existing literature, qualitative content analysis of institutional reports, and statistical data. Empirical sources include data from Kosovo national institutions and international organisations such as the U.S. Department of State and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), among others.

Results and Conclusions: Legal reforms have been introduced, including the enactment of the Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims of Trafficking, as well as amendments to the Kosovo Criminal Code and the 2022–2026 National Strategy Against Human Trafficking. However, weak institutional capacity and corruption hinder enforcement. The findings demonstrate that human trafficking in Kosovo has an upward trend despite the efforts taken by national institutions. Addressing this requires improved inter-agency coordination, enhanced prosecution, and better victim services.

1 INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is one of the most serious violations of human rights and poses a significant challenge to social security and well-being globally. This criminal occurrence involves the exploitation of individuals—especially women and children—for various purposes, including prostitution, forced labour, participation in organised crime, involvement in wars, and forced marriage.¹

Kosovo, as a newly established state with a strategic geographical position and a developing economy, faces many challenges related to human trafficking. These challenges include a two-decade-long transition, internal political problems, fragile justice institutions, corruption, poverty, high unemployment, and limited personnel and legal capacities to effectively prevent and combat human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a criminal offence punishable by up to 20 years of imprisonment under the Criminal Code of Kosovo.² It affects individuals, families, and communities. Victims can be people of any age, gender, ethnicity, or nationality. Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or acceptance of persons using the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, kidnapping, fraud, abuse of power, or exploitation of a sensitive position. It can also occur through the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person who has control over another person for the purpose of exploitation.³

Exploitation includes, but is not limited to, prostitution of others, pornography or other forms of sexual exploitation, begging, forced labour, slavery or acts similar to slavery and captivity.⁴ Human trafficking is often confused with human smuggling, which involves illegal border crossings. Unlike smuggling, trafficking does not require movement; survivors can be recruited and trafficked in their towns or even in their own homes.⁵

Traffickers primarily target individuals in vulnerable situations, such as those in financial need, runaways, individuals without parental care, or those from neglectful or dysfunctional families. Victims may also come from backgrounds marked by domestic violence, mental

1 Francesco Calderoni, *Organized Crime Legislation in the European Union: Harmonization and Approximation of Criminal Law, National Legislations and the EU Framework Decision on the Fight Against Organized Crime* (Springer 2010) doi:10.1007/978-3-642-04331-4.

2 Code No 06/L-074 'Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo' [2019] Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo 2, arts 165, 166.

3 Alexander Kupatadze, *Organized Crime, Political Transitions and State Formation in Post-Soviet Eurasia* (Transnational Crime, Crime Control and Security, Palgrave Macmillan 2012).

4 Jay S Albanese, 'The Causes of Organized Crime: Do Criminals Organize Around Opportunities for Crime, or Do Criminal Opportunities Create New Offenders?' (2000) 16(4) *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 409, doi:10.1177/1043986200016004004.

5 Axel Marx and Jan Wouters, 'Combating Slavery, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking: Are Current International, European and National Instruments Working?' (2017) 8(4) *Global Policy* 495, doi:10.1111/1758-5899.12506.

health problems, substance abuse, or adolescent issues. Numerous factors can influence a trafficker's decision to target a victim. Many are trafficked by romantic partners, including spouses, as well as by family members such as parents, siblings, or guardians.

Consent is not relevant when force, fraud, or coercion is involved—or if the victim is a minor in a sex trafficking situation case—even if payment was involved. Traffickers typically exploit conditions such as poverty, unemployment, family breakdown, lack of access to resources, and political, social, and economic instability. Migration, refugee status, and language barriers can make individuals more susceptible to traffickers for forced labour or sexual purposes.

This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of human trafficking in Kosovo. It evaluates the influencing factors and effectiveness of legal frameworks while offering actionable recommendations for improved collaboration among key stakeholders.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

A general definition of the meaning of human trafficking at the international level has been missing for a long time. However, this changed with the issuance of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, commonly known as the Palermo Protocol.⁶ This protocol defined an international formulation for human trafficking, according to which trafficking in persons means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receiving of persons using the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, kidnapping, fraud, abuse of power, or a position of vulnerability. It can also involve giving or receiving payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person having control over another person for exploitation.

Exploitation includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of others for prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or service, slavery, or practices similar to slavery. This definition recognises all forms of trafficking and does not limit trafficking to sexual services only. It also focuses on the conditions of forced labour, choice, enslaving practices, and slavery, which are defined in international legislation. According to such a definition, trafficking not only focuses on girls and women but also men and boys as victims of trafficking.⁷

Additionally, it is not required that the trafficked victim necessarily cross international borders, since persons can be trafficked by crossing from one area to another within the

6 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (adopted 15 November 2000 UNGA Res 55/25) [2005] UNTS 2237/319.

7 Ervin Muco, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: Paradigms of a Successful Reintegration into Society (Albanian case)' (2013) 9(4) European Scientific Journal 92.

same country. Many countries, including Kosovo, have adopted this definition. However, there are other important definitions. According to the EUROPOL Convention, trafficking in human beings means the subjection of a person to the real and illegal power of others, using violence, threats, abuse of authority, or conspiracy for exploitation, including prostitution, other forms of sexual exploitation, and attacks on minors or trafficking in abandoned children.⁸

Additionally, it is crucial to highlight a particularly heinous form of trafficking involving babies, who are "stolen," falsely declared dead, and then sold to interested "owners".⁹ Therefore, human trafficking means placing a person under the illegal and de facto control of others using violence, threats, abuse of authority, or deceit to facilitate prostitution, forms of sexual exploitation, and the rape of minors, or the trafficking of abandoned children.¹⁰

3 DIMENSIONS AND TRENDS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS IN KOSOVO

Trafficking in human beings causes direct and multifaceted damages to the quality of life in any society where it occurs, regardless of whether the country in question is one of origin, transit, or destination.¹¹ This form of trafficking, especially of women and children, is a serious and systematic violation of many human rights, as guaranteed by international conventions and national laws. It primarily violates the freedom and security of the person and their right to live freely.¹²

Trafficking in human beings, particularly that of women, ranks among the three most profitable businesses, after drug and arms trafficking.¹³ Since the end of the war in Kosovo in 1999, the country has faced an increase in the number of cases of human trafficking, both domestically and internationally. According to the UN Resolution, this growth was particularly influenced by the international presence stationed in Kosovo, which affected both the volume and dynamics of trafficking in disturbing proportions within Kosovar society. Such a situation prompted the international administration in Kosovo to issue a list

8 Naim Tota, *Trafikimi i Qenieve Njerëzore: Aspekte Penale Juridike, Krahësuese dhe Kriminologjike* (Studime 28, UET Press 2018) 22-3.

9 Goran Boskovic, 'Types of Money Laundering and Suppression Methods' (Master's thesis, Police Academy 2003).

10 Vesel Latifi and Haki Demolli, *Kriminalistika: Zbulimi dhe të Provuarit e Krimin* (Universiteti i Prishtinës 2019).

11 Armend Podvorica, 'International Administration of Kosovo as a Driving Factor in the Appearance of Trafficking in Human Beings' (2015) 6(2S5) *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 315, doi:10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n2s5p315.

12 Howard Abadinsk, *Organized Crime* (10th edn, Wadsworth 2013).

13 USAID, *Kuadri Ligjor mbi Trafikimin e Qënieve Njerëzore në Shqipëri dhe Sfidat e Hasura në Praktikën Gjyqësore* (Shkolla e Magjistraturës 2013).

of premises prohibiting United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) personnel from attending certain establishments. One such list (as of the end of 2004) included 200 bars, nightclubs, restaurants, and other establishments suspected of employing victims of human trafficking.¹⁴

According to official statistics, the number of identified victims was 39 in 2011,¹⁵ 54 in 2012,¹⁶ 52 in 2013,¹⁷ and 42 in 2014.¹⁸ The majority of these victims were from Kosovo. Between 2011 and 2014, a total of 42 foreign victims of human trafficking were counted (23 from the Republic of Moldova, 13 from Albania, five from Serbia, and one from Romania). Most of the victims identified in this period were women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation. The number of men trafficked for labour exploitation was one in 2011, four in 2012, two in 2013, and three in 2014. Alarming, children accounted for 44% of identified trafficking victims in 2013-2014.

According to the Report of the U.S. Department of State on Human Trafficking for 2022, Kosovo remains a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking,¹⁹ especially from Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, en route to other European countries. The open or poorly controlled borders between these states, coupled with unsatisfactory regional cooperation, have enabled trafficking activities across the Western Balkans.²⁰ Therefore, human trafficking remains a significant challenge not only for Kosovo but for the entire region.

The 2022 Annual Report of the American Embassy in Kosovo regarding “Trafficking in Human Beings in Kosovo” documented 63 cases of trafficking, reflecting an increase from 54 cases in 2021. Meanwhile, about 70% of the victims were women and girls, mostly aged 18-30.²¹

14 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo S/2003/421* (14 April 2003) <<https://docs.un.org/S/2003/421>> accessed 10 April 2025; Rexhep Gashi, *Krimi i organizuar* (Universiteti i Prishtinës 2023) 190-1.

15 US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2011: Kosovo* (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2011).

16 US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2012: Kosovo* (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2012).

17 US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2013: Kosovo* (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2013).

18 US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2014: Kosovo* (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2014).

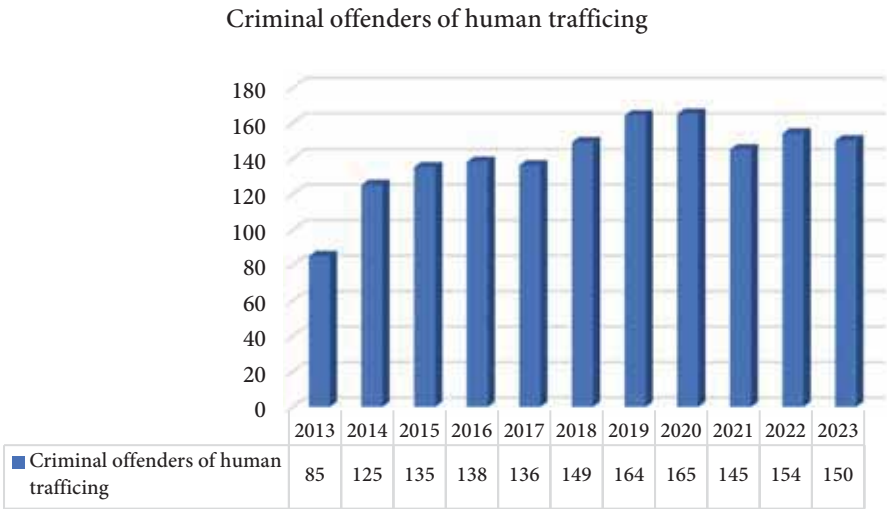
19 US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Reports 2022* (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2022) 331

20 Europol, *European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment, A Corrupting Influence: The Infiltration and Undermining of Europe's Economy and Society by Organised Crime* (Office of the EU 2021).

21 US Department of State (n 19) 331.

Furthermore, the report "Trafficking in Human Beings in Europe" from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) highlights that Balkan countries have often served as transit points for victims travelling to other countries in Europe, especially through routes from Turkey and Syria.²²

Data from the Kosovo State Prosecutor's Office reveals that, between 2013 and 2023, the office handled cases involving 1,546 criminal offenders of human trafficking. These figures are presented in the graph below.²³



Graph 1. Number of criminal offenders of human trafficking treated by Kosovo State Prosecutor

The graph clearly illustrates the consistent rise in the number of individuals processed by the Kosovo State Prosecutor for human trafficking between 2013 and 2023. Starting with 85 offenders in 2013, the data indicates a steady increase, culminating in a high of 160 offenders in 2021. This was succeeded by a modest decline to 154 in 2022 and 150 in 2023.

22 Eliza Galos and others, *Migrant Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Evidence from the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Migration Routes* (IOM 2017).

23 Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, *Work Report for 2023* (KPK 2024); Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, *Annual Work Report of the State Prosecutor 2022* (Office of the Chief State Prosecutor 2023); Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, *Annual Work Report for 2021* (Office of the Chief State Prosecutor 2022); Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, *Annual Report of the Interinstitutional Feedback Mechanism on Characteristic Criminal Offences* (Office of the Chief State Prosecutor 2020). See, 'Reports' (*The Prosecutorial System of the Republic of Kosovo*, 2025) <<https://prokuroria-rks.org/en/reports/>> accessed 10 April 2025.

The increase observed over the past decade highlights the ongoing issue of human trafficking in Kosovo, while also indicating that there have been improved institutional initiatives aimed at identifying, investigating, and prosecuting these crimes. The rise in cases may be attributed to the implementation of enhanced legal frameworks, improved coordination among institutions, and more effective reporting mechanisms. Nonetheless, the recent decline suggests a potential need for refreshed approaches to maintain advancements, enhance preventive measures, and ensure that legal actions effectively lead to enduring deterrence and the safeguarding of victims.

Across all dimensions and trends related to human trafficking, it is evident that every form of trafficking has serious consequences—not only for the victims but for society as a whole. Therefore, combating human trafficking in Kosovo and beyond necessitates a multi-dimensional approach, including public awareness, education, and international cooperation with local and international institutions.

In response to these challenges, Kosovo's competent institutions have issued the National Strategy Against Human Trafficking (2022-2026). This strategic document defines the policies and measures that must be implemented to combat human trafficking in Kosovo. It recommends concrete actions and measures aimed at addressing identified challenges and improving the situation in the prevention and effective fight against trafficking.²⁴

In this context, actions are planned to improve the national mechanism for addressing human trafficking. These include implementing coordinated efforts to prevent trafficking and raise awareness of its consequences, strengthening systems for victim identification, protection and long-term reintegration, enhancing the efficiency of criminal prosecution of perpetrators, and bolstering regional and international cooperation.

These actions are based on a comprehensive assessment of the current domestic context, as well as the regional and global context regarding trafficking. The strategy draws upon findings from strategic documents and other empirical studies conducted over the past years.

Consequently, addressing the recommended actions is expected to positively impact the identified gaps in the system, while simultaneously enabling the advancement and strengthening of prevention and combating human trafficking.²⁵

24 Government of Kosovo, *National Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings in Kosovo 2022-2026* (Ministry of Internal Affairs 2022) <<https://antitrafikimi.rks-gov.net/f/34/Strategy>> accessed 10 April 2025.

25 *ibid.*

4 CAUSES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN KOSOVO

The main criminogenic factors influencing human trafficking include poverty, unemployment, economic crises, armed conflicts or war, fragile security and justice systems, and the presence of corruption and organised crime, among others.

Poverty and unemployment are factors that contribute to human trafficking in Kosovo and beyond. Individuals from economically disadvantaged families are often vulnerable to the deceptions of traffickers, who offer them opportunities for work and a better life outside of Kosovo. Thus, in search of a better life, these victims become targets of this crime.

Kosovo is characterised by a fragile economy and a high level of unemployment, with labour market indicators among the weakest in the region and Europe. According to data from the Statistics Agency of Kosovo (SAK), the unemployment rate in Kosovo is 11.8%, while participation in the active labour force is only 38.5%. In contrast, 61.5% of the working-age population is economically inactive.

Accordingly, of the total working-age population of 1,195,426, only 461,894 are active in the labour force, comprising 403,813 employed and 58,081 unemployed individuals. The remaining 733,532 people are economically inactive. According to World Bank reports, employment growth in Kosovo is limited by an insufficient human capital base, coupled with a poorly educated and inadequately skilled workforce.²⁶

Lack of quality education and unemployment are also significant causes of human trafficking. In the rural regions of Kosovo and other Balkan countries, a considerable degree of illiteracy persists, alongside limited employment opportunities. These factors encourage migration and recruitment by criminal networks.²⁷

Public dissatisfaction with Kosovo's education and healthcare systems has further exacerbated this issue. According to the European Commission's 2023 Progress Report for Kosovo, the education system remains one of the most underdeveloped in the region. The quality of education is reflected in the latest PISA tests by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), where Kosovo ranked 78th out of 80 participating countries.²⁸

Additionally, Kosovo's labour market indicators are among the weakest in the region and Europe. According to data from the Statistics Agency of Kosovo, the unemployment rate stands at 11.8%, and only 38.5% of the working-age population participates in the labour force, compared to 61.5% who are economically inactive.

26 European Commission, 'Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014-2020: Kosovo, EU4 Employment and Education' <https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance_en> accessed 10 April 2025.

27 *ibid.*

28 Amira Ramhorst (ed), *Study on Youth Employment in the Western Balkans* (2nd edn, Regional Cooperation Council 2021).

Out of a total working-age population of 1,195,426, only 461,894 individuals are active in the labour force—403,813 employed and 58,081 unemployed—while 733,532 are classified as economically inactive. According to the World Bank, employment growth in Kosovo is hindered by an insufficient human capital base and an undereducated, inadequately skilled workforce.²⁹

Chronic unemployment in many countries, including Kosovo, and especially among women, has influenced the spread of recruitment for exploitation and prostitution.³⁰

War and migration: The armed conflict in Kosovo in 1999 and the ongoing crises in the region have created suitable conditions for human trafficking. The Kosovar refugee crisis of 1999, during which the Serbian government forcibly expelled nearly one million Albanian residents to neighbouring countries such as Albania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro,³¹ significantly increased the vulnerability of displaced populations to exploitation.

Patterns of legal and irregular migration have heightened individuals' exposure to criminal networks that exploit Kosovo's unstable political and economic situation. The history of Kosovar emigration is long, complex, and continues to pose challenges for the country. The main destinations for Kosovo's citizens have been Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. Currently, around 542,000 people with migration backgrounds from Kosovo reside in Germany.

Corruption and fragile institutions of justice: Kosovo is not immune to corruption in some institutions of the justice system and public state institutions. Such corruption favours human trafficking. Weak justice institutions and a lack of cooperation between different authorities allow traffickers to operate unhindered.³² This is evidenced by findings that have influenced and continue to influence the inefficiency of the judicial and prosecutorial system, including:

- Protracted judicial procedures that result from corruption, leading to the prescription of specific criminal cases;
- Lenient punitive policies;
- Illegal influence on the judiciary.³³

29 European Commission (n 26).

30 Zejnulla Gruda, *E Drejta Ndërkombëtare Publike* (Universiteti i Prishtinës 2013).

31 Astri Suhrke and others, *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis* (UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit 2020).

32 'Corruption Perceptions Index 2022' (*Transparency International*, January 2023) <<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023>> accessed 10 April 2025; 'CPI 2022 for Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Growing Security Risks and Authoritarianism Threaten Progress Against Corruption' (*Transparency International*, 31 January 2023) <<https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2022-eastern-europe-central-asia-growing-security-risks-authoritarianism-threaten-progress-corruption>> accessed 10 April 2025.

33 Kosovo Democratic Institute, *Transparency International Kosova* (KDI 2020) <<https://kdi-kosova.org/en/>> accessed 10 April 2025.

Illustrative of these issues, data from the first half of 2015 revealed a lack of satisfactory treatment of corruption cases in general. Of the 717 cases pending resolution and carried over from previous years, only 128 cases related to corruption were resolved, representing just 18%. Furthermore, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office managed to resolve only five out of 53 pending cases, further reflecting the systemic challenges in prosecuting high-level corruption.

Organised crime networks: International organised crime networks are widespread in the region, including Kosovo. These networks often exploit weak legal infrastructure and corruption to facilitate human trafficking. They are responsible for creating international trafficking routes and recruiting and transporting victims in and out of the region.³⁴

All of these factors collectively contribute to an environment in which human traffickers can operate with relative impunity. Upon arrival at their destination, victims are deprived of their identification documents and mistreated both physically and sexually.

5 KOSOVO LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The legal foundation for combating and preventing trafficking in Kosovo is established by Law No. 04/L-218 on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims of Trafficking,³⁵ enacted in 2013. This legislation embraces a victim-centred approach, establishing the legal framework for various protective and supportive measures. It requires victims' access to legal assistance, healthcare, safe housing, and compensation, while emphasising the importance of procedural protections and upholding the principle that trafficked individuals should not face punishment for any illegal actions that may arise directly from their exploitation.

Furthermore, the legal structure is reinforced by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo (No. 06/L-074), which clearly defines human trafficking as a criminal offence in Article 165. This provision includes all the typical aspects of trafficking, such as the recruitment, transportation, harbouring, and receipt of individuals through means like coercion, fraud, abuse of power, or other manipulative tactics aimed at exploitation. The trafficking of minors is unequivocally deemed a criminal act, irrespective of the methods employed. Article 166 of the Code specifies certain aggravating circumstances, including offences perpetrated by organised criminal groups, those targeting minors, or involving

34 'EU Policy Cycle - *European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT)*' (Europol, 2023) <<https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/empact>> accessed 10 April 2025.

35 Law No 04/L-218 'On Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims of Trafficking' [2013] Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo 34.

public officials. These circumstances lead to increased penalties, which can extend to a maximum of twenty years of imprisonment.³⁶ Earlier normative instruments, such as UNMIK Regulation No. 2001/4, served as transitional measures criminalising trafficking and remain historically significant in shaping Kosovo's early institutional responses.³⁷

Kosovo's ongoing dedication to addressing the issue of trafficking is evident in the National Strategy Against Trafficking in Human Beings from 2022 to 2026. This strategic document outlines key priorities related to prevention, the protection of victims, prosecution efforts, and collaboration among various institutions. This approach highlights the importance of public education, professional training, international collaboration, and the creation of sustainable rehabilitation programs for victims.³⁸

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research paper confirm that human trafficking remains a persistent and complex challenge in Kosovo, posing serious concerns for both state and judicial institutions. The case analyses demonstrate that the victims of trafficking are mainly women and children, who are exposed to various forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour, trafficking for forced marriage, trafficking for participation in organised crime, trafficking for participation in war, and trafficking for begging, among others.

While Kosovo's legal framework has notably improved in recent years—with the adoption of new laws and the strengthening of policies for the protection of victims and the prosecution of human traffickers—implementing these laws remains limited due to a lack of resources, limited institutional capacity, and the presence of corruption in some institutions within the justice system.

Furthermore, poverty, lack of opportunities for quality education and employment, as well as institutional weaknesses in the field of justice related to law enforcement, contribute to increasing individuals' vulnerability to trafficking. Victim protection continues to be a major challenge, as many of them face difficulties in accessing psycho-social support and reintegration into society.

This discussion highlights the importance of a more coordinated approach between state institutions, non-governmental organisations, and international partners to prevent and combat human trafficking more effectively. Public awareness is also essential, as many victims are unaware of their rights or lack confidence in justice institutions.

36 Code No 06/L-074 (n 2) arts 165, 166.

37 UNMIK Regulation No 2001/4 'On the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons in Kosovo' (adopted 12 January 2001) <https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/regulations/02english/E2001regs/RE2001_04.htm> accessed 10 April 2025.

38 Government of Kosovo (n 24).

Overall, the research paper finds that significant progress has been made in the fight against human trafficking in Kosovo. However, there are still gaps that require further reforms, particularly in strengthening prevention mechanisms, improving law enforcement, and providing comprehensive support to victims. Addressing this issue requires an integrated strategy that targets the root causes and enhances local and international institutional coordination.

7 CONCLUSION

One of the most dangerous criminal occurrences in contemporary society is the trafficking of human beings. This crime has reached alarming proportions globally, seriously attacking fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as essential social values. Kosovo—as a relatively new state (independent since 2008)—continues to grapple with the challenges of effectively addressing them.

Kosovo has taken notable steps to strengthen its anti-trafficking framework, including improving the protection of victims and the prosecution of traffickers. Nevertheless, human trafficking remains a persistent and deeply rooted issue, exposing the structural vulnerabilities of state institutions. A more coordinated, efficient, and advanced response—both nationally and internationally—is essential to prevent and combat this crime.

Key interventions include taking preventive measures to address the main factors that cause human trafficking. Through such efforts, combined with tougher repressive measures, it is possible to reduce the impact of this occurrence and better protect the rights and freedoms of the victims in Kosovo. An effective approach to combating human trafficking in Kosovo has to be multifarious and coordinated. First, standardising data collection methods and building a consolidated database that isolates trafficking statistics—including those linked to offender prosecution and punishment—will foster inter-institutional cooperation. Simultaneously, operators of hotlines should receive specific training to improve their handling of trafficking incidents and identification. Moreover, social services play a crucial role in properly fighting trafficking. Social welfare organisations must be adequately funded to meet legal requirements and provide timely assistance to victims. Public awareness should rise from comprehensive education initiatives, including television, radio, social media, and community-based seminars. Close collaboration with government authorities is crucial for these campaigns to reach a broad audience and have a lasting impact.

Furthermore, the correct application of already passed laws is vital. Authorities must intensify their probes of traffickers and other pertinent officials, ensuring that penalties are consistent with the provisions of the Criminal Code of Kosovo's conditions and the National Strategy and Action Plan against Human Trafficking in Persons (2022–2026). Moreover, specific social and financial interventions are needed to identify and support young people forced into begging, as well as other victims of trafficking. This entails enhancing victim

protection strategies by means of anonymity preservation, reintegration program enhancement, and professional training possibilities for survivors. Ongoing professional development for prosecutors, judges, and specialised police agencies is also essential to uphold the rule of law, ensure the effectiveness of investigations, and reduce the backlog of unresolved trafficking cases. Finally, stronger international cooperation with regional and global organisations—especially EUROPOL and INTERPOL—will enhance Kosovo's capacity to combat trafficking networks that operate across national boundaries.

From all this, it follows that closer cooperation between state institutions, international organisations, and civil society is required, as only through this collaboration can human trafficking be more effectively prevented and the protection of victims in Kosovo be ensured.

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АНОТАЦІЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ

Тематичне дослідження

ТОРГІВЛЯ ЛЮДЬМИ ТА ПРИЧИНИ ЦЬОГО ЗЛОЧИНУ В КОСОВІ

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Вступ. Торгівля людьми є надзвичайно небезпечним злочином, що становить виклик для Косова, впливає на регіон в цілому, а також створює серйозну загрозу правам людини. Кримінальні випадки торгівлі людьми часто пов'язані з організованими злочинними групами, які діють на транснаціональному рівні, що робить боротьбу з цим кримінальним явищем складною та нагальною справою.

Методи. У цьому дослідженні використовується підхід огляду літератури, якісний контент-аналіз інституційних звітів та статистичних даних. Емпіричні джерела містять дані національних установ Косова та міжнародних організацій, зокрема таких як Державний департамент США та Міжнародна організація з міграції (МОМ).

Результати та висновки. Було запроваджено правові реформи, включно з прийняттям Закону про запобігання та боротьбу з торгівлею людьми та захист жертв торгівлі людьми, а також було внесено зміни до Кримінального кодексу Косова та Національної стратегії боротьби з торгівлею людьми на 2022–2026 роки. Однак слабка інституційна спроможність та корупція перешкоджають правозастосуванню. Результати дослідження показують, що торгівля людьми в Косові має тенденцію до зростання, незважаючи на зусилля національних інституцій. Вирішення цієї проблеми вимагає покращення міжвідомчої координації, посилення кримінального переслідування та поліпшення допомоги потерпілим.

Ключові слова: торгівля людьми, Косово, жертви, експлуатація, проституція, боротьба, запобігання.