

# KOSOVO AMERICAN EDUCATION FUND

*Quarterly Newsletter, March 2023*



Festa Stavileci, Duke Law '23

---

## Government of Kosovo Supports KAEF

---



January 11th, 2023 - On its 118th meeting, the Government of Kosovo approved a proposal-decision to allocate 100K EUR to the Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF). This decision is a testament to the government's continued support and recognition of KAEF's transformative impact on the post-graduate education opportunities for Kosovar students.

Administered by the American Councils for International Education, KAEF has played a vital role in helping over 100 Kosovar students attend more than 40 prestigious universities in the United States throughout its 19-year history. Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, acknowledged the program's significant achievements and impactful results, noting that the vast majority of KAEF graduates uniquely positioned to contribute to the development of Kosovo.

The Government's recent commitment will greatly contribute to the program's ongoing success. The KAEF community expresses immense gratitude to the Government of Kosovo for their continued support and recognition of program's importance in nurturing future leaders. As we move forward, we are excited to continue our collaboration with the Government of Kosovo to provide life-changing post-graduate education opportunities to our youth.

---

## KAEF Business Breakfast Series

---

January 18th, 2023 - The Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF) hosted its third installment of its 'KAEF Business Breakfast' series, featuring an engaging discussion with Mërgim Cahani, the Founder and CEO of Gjirafa.

During the event, Mr. Cahani shared his inspiring entrepreneurial journey, which took him from a successful career in the United States to returning to Kosovo in pursuit of a more fulfilling path. He provided insights into the development of Gjirafa and its wide array of products and services. Additionally, Mr. Cahani addressed questions from alumni and guests, offering a broader perspective on the challenges and opportunities within the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector.

The KAEF Business Breakfast is a series of monthly events that bring together members of the business community to engage in high-level discussions on economic and other significant issues facing Kosovo today.



---

## Former President Atifete Jahjaga Visits American Councils

---



February 24th, 2023 - American Councils for International Education had the distinction of hosting a reception to honor former Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga and address issues of strengthening the Western Balkans through education and youth leadership. The reception celebrated collaborative education programs in the Balkans like the Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF). KAEF is a prestigious education program providing graduate Fellowships for master's level study at leading U.S. universities to empower the future leaders of Kosovo with the knowledge and tools needed to promote the country's economic development.

President Jahjaga served as the first woman and fourth President of the Republic of Kosovo. She was Kosovo's first non-partisan candidate, the first female head of state in the modern Balkans, and, at the time, the youngest female world leader elected to the highest office. President Jahjaga participates regularly in initiatives aimed at empowering women and supporting survivors of sexual violence from the Kosovo War. She is the founder of the Jahjaga Foundation, a non-governmental organization that aims to support the democratic development of Kosovo and the wider Balkans through social inclusion and support for marginalized groups. President Jahjaga is also an Honorary KAEF Committee Member.

*In sum, what KAEF and American Councils are doing, is building blocks for a working democracy and economy. And building blocks for the Kosovo-American friendship, - President Jahjaga said at the conclusion of her remarks.*

American Councils and the Kosovo American Education Fund are grateful for President Jahjaga and her support of strengthening democracy in Kosovo through education.

---

## Alumni Spotlight: KAEF Alumni and the Public Sector

---

In this edition, we feature three KAEF alumni who have been making a significant impact on the public sector in Kosovo - Zana Zeqiri Rudi, Selim Selimi, and Yllza Hoti. They share their experiences and how KAEF has contributed to their growth and success in serving their country.



**Zana Zeqiri Rudi** (Public Policy, Harvard University '10)

### **How has KAEF helped in your preparation to contribute through the public sector?**

The fair and rigorous selection process, the quality education received in the US, the support received during the program, and the feeling of belonging to an amazing group of committed individuals (KAEF fellows) who are contributing to Kosovo, make our educational and professional journey exceptional. I am thankful for the support I received from KAEF to obtain a Masters in Public Policy with a focus on International and Global Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School in the United States. It equipped me with the right set of skills and experiences to contribute to Kosovo's public sector with my passion to serve my country and bring knowledge and experiences home.

### **Your message for the 15th anniversary of independence**

Kosovo is an independent state recognized by the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, most European Union member states, as well as other countries around the world. Today, Kosovars can be proud of the modern, inclusive republic we have, where everyone feels at home, safe, and represented. Kosovo is here to stay, and we are all doing our part to strengthen its statehood and international standing.

---

## Alumni Spotlight:

# KAEF Alumni and the Public Sector

---



**Selim Selimi** (International Development Policy, Duke University '10)

KAEF provides you with an opportunity, your US university provides you with tools, but it is up to you to decide how to best utilize them. People pursue education in order to better themselves and be more competitive in the job market, but being part of KAEF is more than that. Being part of KAEF also provides a sense of community and a mission to give back. At Duke University, I studied Law and Development - International Public Policy. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Learning from world-renowned academics and policymakers in an environment where many successful people have thrived is utterly rewarding. Studying in the United States provides you with the most advanced knowledge in your field, making you globally competitive. My ambition was to put those tools to use in the public sector in Kosovo.

I had the chance to actively influence the development of Rule of Law policy-making while I was employed in the public sector. I had a lot of opportunity to use the skills and knowledge I acquired at Duke while serving as Rule of Law Advisor to President Atifete Jahjaga, then as Rule of Law Advisor and Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and as Minister of Justice in Avdullah Hoti's Government.

As Minister of Justice of Kosovo my top priority was to modify policies to reflect values. My team and I defined the guiding concepts, and we shaped policies in accordance with them:

1. Accountability of the Prosecution and Courts: This goal served as the foundation for the first Vetting document used to vet judges and prosecutors and for amending the Law governing their disciplinary liability.
2. Enhance the Free Market Economy: the guiding premise for completing the work on creating the Kosovo Commercial Court.
3. Combating corruption: the guiding concept for amending the Criminal Code, which includes suspending public officials accused of corruption and amending the Anti-Corruption Agency Law.
4. Expanding and safeguarding the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ people: One of the guiding concepts for completing Kosovo's Civil Code.
5. Humane Treatment and Rehabilitation of Prisoners: the guiding principle for Correctional Services Law amendment.

I currently work in a program funded by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) of the US State Department as a Rule of Law Advisor. As I am in charge of multiple East African countries, within the program, I am able to create and carry out frameworks for policies that support the rule of law and bolster the criminal justice system in the host nations. My responsibility is to provide advice on the institutional reform of the legal system, the prosecutor's office, and law enforcement. KAEF has been a steadfast supporter during my whole career in the public sector. It has given me access to a network of friends and experts that share my interests and are willing to go above and beyond to assist you.

---

## Alumni Spotlight: KAEF Alumni and the Public Sector

---



**Yllza Hoti** (Online MBA, University of Minnesota' 22)

### **How has KAEF helped in your preparation to contribute through the public sector?**

Pursuing an MBA degree as a KAEF fellow has been a transformative experience, allowing me to gain knowledge and skills that I am now able to apply day to day in my role as a Member of Parliament. In addition to gaining expertise in my field, my exposure to different international models has broadened my perspective on policymaking. Additionally, the scholarship program has provided me with networking opportunities which have increased my understanding of different cultures and practices. My MBA degree has given me a well-rounded knowledge of the business environment, which is particularly useful in my work in Parliamentary Committees. Through my work on the Committee for Budget and Finance, I have been able to contribute to the review and amendment of the Budget of the Republic of Kosovo, using my analytical skills to identify ways in which various groups of our society can benefit from increased investments in different sectors of the economy.

### **Your message for the 15th anniversary of independence**

The 15th anniversary of Kosovo's independence is an important milestone in our country's path to social and economic development, as well as international integration. I'm proud to see the progress that we have made in such a short period of time, starting with the establishment of democratic institutions and all the way to creating a thriving private sector. As we reflect on our achievements as a country, it's also important to recall the role that education has had in this process. Throughout this time, programs like KAEF have supported the youth of Kosovo, helping them gain qualitative international education. More importantly, however, they've promoted the importance of giving back and contributing to our communities, which I believe is a key driver to our country's development. I am grateful for the support I received from KAEF, which enabled me to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute effectively to the public sector, and I am fully committed to continue working to address the issues that matter most to our citizens. Happy 15th Independence Day, Kosovo!

---

# American Councils' Leadership Visits Kosovo

---

David Patton, President and CEO of American Councils for International Education, along with Michael Curtis, Senior Vice President for Strategic Development, recently visited Kosovo in support of American Councils' programs, including the Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF). During their visit, they met with several high-ranking officials to discuss the importance of these programs for fostering collaboration and promoting educational exchange opportunities.



## Meeting with President Vjosa Osmani

Dr. David Patton and Michael Curtis had the honor of meeting with President Vjosa Osmani, who expressed her gratitude for the work of American Councils and the KAEF program in providing educational opportunities for young Kosovans. President Osmani emphasized that the programs under the umbrella of the American Councils further deepen the cooperation between Kosovo and the United States, as exchange programs are of mutual interest.

## Meeting with Prime Minister Albin Kurti

During their meeting with Prime Minister Albin Kurti and his Chief of Staff, Luan Dalipi, a KAEF alumnus, Dr. Patton conveyed his appreciation for the Government of Kosovo's support of the KAEF program. Prime Minister Kurti acknowledged the contributions of American Councils in Kosovo and reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing quality education and career opportunities for young Kosovans.



## Meeting with Speaker of the Assembly Glauk Konjufca

Dr. David Patton and Michael Curtis also met with the Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, Glauk Konjufca. The meeting focused on discussing American Councils' activities in Kosovo, including the KAEF program, and their role in developing the intellectual and professional capacities of young people. Dr. Patton expressed American Councils' ongoing commitment to support academic capacity building for young Kosovans.





---

## Alumni Spotlight:

# Social Cohesion in European Societies: Conceptualizing and Assessing Togetherness

### Dr. Bujar Aruqaj

---

March 17th, 2023 - Alumnus Bujar Aruqaj published a book called *Social Cohesion in European Societies: Conceptualizing and Assessing Togetherness*. This book is a theoretical and empirical exploration into 'collective consciousness', a foundational concern in the discipline of sociology. Social cohesion or togetherness is once again at the heart of the debate about the fate of modern societies. This increased focus was initially sparked by fears of diversification related to the 'refugee crisis'. 'Lockdowns' and 'social distancing' during the pandemic further deepened the perception that nothing less than the 'social fabric' was at risk. Faced with such great upheavals and transformations, how does a society still manage to keep together?

Analytically, the first goal of the book is to define cohesion as a social fact and make it empirically applicable. To do so, a conceptual reformulation and cross-level integrated measurement model (individual, group, societal) of cohesion are discussed. Initially, differences in the degree of cohesion in 38 European societies are investigated. The book further pursues to find out which contexts (e.g. inequalities, affluence, etc.) contribute to the fact that some societies have higher cohesion than others. It provides a special analysis of how latent conflict across major social categories (region, social class, gender, migration status, ethnicity) erodes cohesion. Finally, it shows that togetherness as a social opportunity structure has a tremendous impact in its own right on quality of life, sense of safety, and human capabilities.

Bujar is a KAEF fellow, Postdoctoral Researcher and Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. His research interests include social cohesion, the theories of development, collective identity construction, and the sociology of music. This book will appeal to students and scholars interested in solidarity and social integration working in sociology, social psychology, and development studies.



---

## Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics and KAEF present: "Building Democracy in the 21st Century" Discussion Group Series

---



The Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics and the Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF) were delighted to host Dr. Qëndrim Gashi as an In-Residence Fellow from February 15th to March 2nd. Dr. Gashi led a three-part Discussion Group series titled "Building Democracy in the 21st Century," focusing on democracy development in Europe's youngest country, the Republic of Kosovo.

### **Discussion 1: Kosovo's Path to Independence and Democracy**

In the first discussion, Dr. Gashi was joined by Dr. Pëllumb Kelmendi, a political scientist and board member of the Society for Albanian Studies, as well as an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Auburn University. Together, they explored Kosovo's journey towards independence and democracy.

### **Discussion 2: Engaging Minority and Marginalized Groups**

The second discussion featured Atifete Jahjaga, the former President of the Republic of Kosovo. She joined Dr. Gashi for an insightful conversation about the importance of including minority and marginalized groups in the decision-making process.

### **Discussion 3: Obstacles of Maintaining Democracy in Kosovo and the Balkan Region**

The final discussion in the series brought Dr. Enver Hasani, former President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kosovo, into the conversation with Dr. Gashi. They discussed the challenges of maintaining democracy in Kosovo and the Balkan region, particularly in light of the war against Ukraine that began a year prior.

The "Building Democracy in the 21st Century" series provided valuable insights and stimulated thought-provoking discussions on the development and maintenance of democracy in Kosovo and the broader region.



Learn more: [kaef-online.org](https://kaef-online.org)

To support our program and latest initiative, please visit:

<https://www.mygiving.net/donate/KAEF>

CONTACT:

ks@americancouncils.org  
52 Rexhep Luci Street, 2nd Floor  
10000 Prishtina, Kosovo

