

Economic Empowerment of Women

The structural, individual, and social conditions that support the employment of disadvantaged women in rural areas of Kosovo are improved.

Context

Kosovo's legal and institutional frameworks on gender equality are largely aligned with international standards and rank among the most progressive in the Western Balkans. However, persistent gaps in implementation and enforcement hinder their impact. Deep-rooted gender norms, socio-economic inequalities, and structural barriers continue to restrict women's access to employment, property, finance, and public services, particularly for women in rural areas, ethnic minorities, and those with limited education or work experience.

Gender inequalities in the labour market are strongly influenced by traditional gender roles and are reflected in low employment rates, income disparities, underrepresentation in decision-making, and unequal access to resources. Women in rural areas face compounded disadvantages due to weak infrastructure, limited services, and restrictive social norms. Education and skills gaps, especially in vocational training, further contribute to income inequality.

Kosovo has the lowest female labour force participation rate in Europe, at around 20 percent. Also, women manage only around 7 percent of businesses, and just 11 percent are women-owned.¹ Women entrepreneurs face multiple obstacles, including limited childcare and eldercare, restricted access to finance and property, skills gaps, and persistent gender stereotypes.

As a result, increasing women's economic participation has become a policy priority, reflected in Kosovo's European Reform Agenda and national development and employment strategies, which emphasize measures to boost women's employment and reduce economic inactivity.

Project objective and approach

The Economic Empowerment of Women project addresses gender inequalities in Kosovo by supporting local institutions to

translate policy frameworks into accessible, inclusive services for disadvantaged women.

It focuses on supporting women aged 35–55 from rural areas and ethnic minorities to enter or re-enter the labour market. Using a multidimensional and gender-transformative approach, the project tackles structural barriers such as unequal access to resources, unpaid care work, restrictive social norms, and limited mobility. Key interventions include accessible vocational training, mentoring, business start-up and social enterprise support, childcare solutions, and flexible learning and working formats tailored to women's needs.

The project works closely with local partners, the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK), civil society, and private sector to design and deliver gender-sensitive employment services. It also aims to strengthen the capacities of local partners through targeted training and improved coordination. Awareness-raising campaigns further address discriminatory gender norms related to work and economic participation.

By fostering collaboration between public institutions, civil society, and the private sector, the project promotes women's social inclusion and economic development, contributing to poverty reduction, social cohesion, and sustainable development in Kosovo.

Project name	Economic Empowerment of Women (EEW)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country of Implementation	Republic of Kosovo
Lead executing agency	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Duration	10/2025 – 09/2028
Main Partners	Ministry of Labour, Finance and War Veterans Values (MLFWVV) The Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK)

¹ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (ASK) ask.rks-gov.net

Areas of interventions / Project outputs

Capacity development of labour market service providers

This area of intervention focuses on strengthening the capacities of selected labour market service providers to pilot innovative labour market initiatives for disadvantaged women. It includes organizational development consulting, advisory support and targeted capacity-building measures that integrate gender equality and inclusion. In addition, support will be provided to the Ministry of Labour, Family and War Veterans Values and EARK on the design of new labour market interventions and social enterprises.

Labour market services to improve women's employability

Under this area of intervention, the project ensures that disadvantaged women, especially those from rural areas have access to gender-responsive labour market services that enhance their employability. This includes support for remedial basic education, labour-market-oriented qualifications, career orientation, counselling, job placement and social mentoring services. In parallel, the project provides advisory support to civil society organizations to develop comprehensive services with a strong focus on gender equality and social inclusion.

Information and awareness raising campaigns

This aspect focuses on gender-transformative information and awareness-raising campaigns to increase social acceptance of women's participation in vocational training and employment. It includes campaigns on occupational and employment opportunities for women and targeted measures to raise awareness among policymakers and employers about the economic and business benefits of increased female labour market participation.



Main activities of the project

- Analysis of capacity development needs of selected labour market service providers, with a focus on gender equality and social inclusion.
- Implementation of tailored organizational development and capacity-building measures for selected labour market actors.
- Advisory support to MLFWVV and EARK to identify and reduce structural barriers limiting women's access to the labour market.
- Development and delivery of labour-market-oriented qualification and upskilling modules.
- Support for the development and implementation of basic education modules for disadvantaged women.
- Expansion of career orientation, counselling, placement services, and social mentoring offers.
- Advisory support for the development and implementation of an integrated "lighthouse" pilot initiative for employment promotion, such as the establishment of a model social enterprise.
- Advisory services to MLFWVV on the design and delivery of financial literacy training for women.
- Advisory support to civil society organizations to develop comprehensive start-up support services and establish peer-to-peer exchange networks.
- Implementation of gender-transformative information and awareness-raising campaigns to shift societal perceptions of women as active labour market participants.
- Targeted campaign to raise awareness among policymakers and employers on the economic and business benefits of increased female labour market participation.



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