

BRIDGING GAPS ABOUT KOSOVO, FROM KOSOVO

— **A report on the Kosovo
Research & Analysis
Fellowship**

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**Bridging Gaps About Kosovo,
From Kosovo**

Author:
Juan Manuel Montoro

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— **Bridging Gaps About Kosovo,
From Kosovo**

Introduction

This report summarizes the first years of experience of the Kosovo Research and Analysis Fellowship (KRAF), an initiative established and funded by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society.

Conceived in 2016, KRAF was envisioned as a means to bring together researchers from different backgrounds and profiles whose interests converge on Kosovo. Eight years on, this program has produced impactful outcomes and it has become a key resource to better understand the newest state in Europe, its internal dynamics and international challenges, as well as the overall regional situation.

Based on a combination of researchers' expertise and local priorities, this program defined and carried on an agenda of research, dissemination and policy advisory that pragmatically adapted its horizons towards the new demands that emerged in these globally uncertain years.

As a structured fellowship, the program also provided irreplaceable financial support and mentorship to young researchers whose academic and policy research on Kosovo-related issues often has difficulties to find a home.

In addition, there are many intangible assets that lie at the core of this fruitful experience. The program fostered innovative methodologies, boosted careers and made connections at a human level that official diplomacy and scholarly work often cannot reach. KRAF is different. It is more than a fellowship scheme. For many it served as a way of connecting Kosovo to a wider picture or, even more so, to see the world from within Kosovo.

We hope readers might find some evidence of this in the pages to come and we invite them to explore and discuss how to integrate some of its valuable insights into other similar contexts.





WHY





Why did you decide to create a program like this?

KRAF was born as an idea aimed to help the country open up to the world. There was a need to engage more actively with similar European organizations, particularly in countries that had not recognized Kosovo so we realized how important it was to improve communications between our respective civil societies. We started by providing accurate and reliable information about Kosovo and we engaged with researchers from the Balkans and wider Europe so they could conduct studies on the aspects they desired. This approach has helped us achieve two important goals with a relatively small investment: enriching the fund of analyses conducted by skilled and objective researchers concerning political developments in the country and organizing numerous advocacy events to spread the truth about Kosovo.

Luan Shllaku

Former Executive Director, KFOS.



What makes KRAF different from other fellowship schemes of its type?

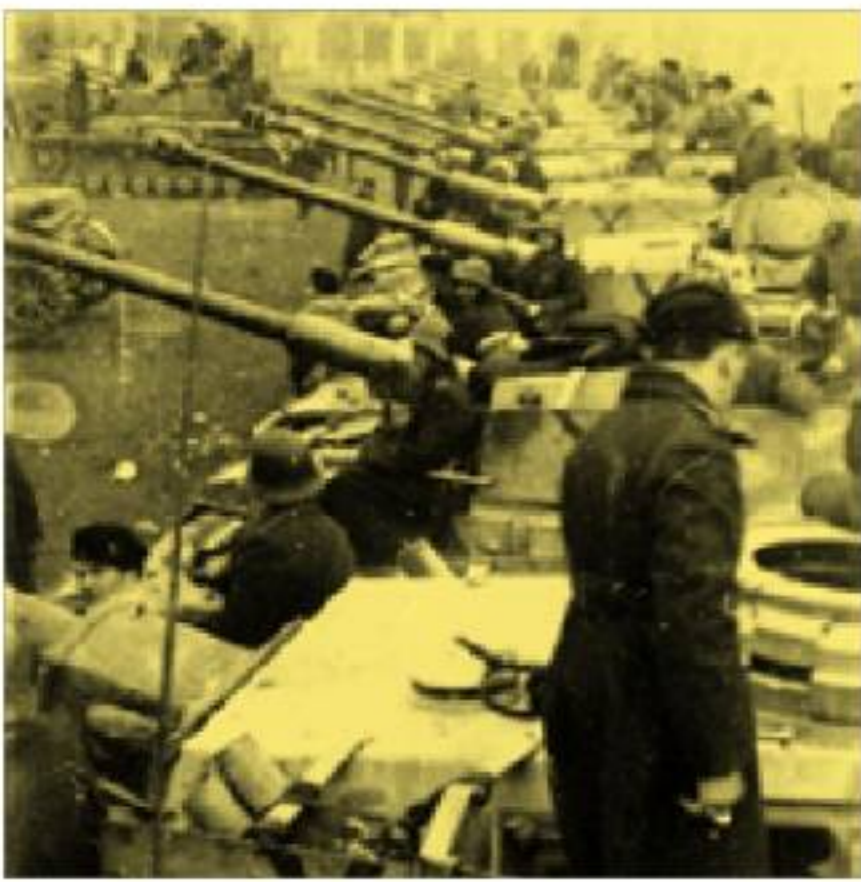
KRAF started as a vehicle connecting the analyst community of non-recognising and neighbouring countries to Kosovo and its contemporary socio-political reality. It gradually evolved into a process that generated high-quality research on Kosovo's post-independence policy challenges. And, yet more recently, it also gave expert guidance to upcoming Kosovar and foreign analysts for developing innovative ideas and recommendations for Kosovo's policy making in the green, energy and digitalisation agenda. Throughout, KRAF proved to be a versatile and highly effective platform enabling and facilitating high-caliber and policy-relevant analysis as well as an initiative that created a transnational community of dynamic, upcoming scholars working in and/or on Kosovo.

Ioannis Armakolas

Academic coordinator of KRAF.

MAKING SENSE OF KOSOVO

ON PAST AND PRESENT



CIVIL RESISTANCE

POST-WAR KOSOVO

1945

End of WWII, Kosovo. The start of Socialist Yugoslavia which included Kosovo as a region

1974

The Yugoslav Constitution brought greater autonomy to Kosovo, and ethnic Albanians achieved a fairer treatment.

1989

Milosevic's Yugoslavia annulled the 1974 Constitution and started a campaign of discrimination against ethnic Albanians.

1998-99

The Kosovo war erupted and ended with NATO's intervention, and UNMIK as the sole administration.



**114 STATES
RECOGNIZED**
KOSOVO'S STATEHOOD.

**93 STATES DO NOT
RECOGNIZE IT, AMONG
THEM 5 EU MEMBERS:**
SPAIN, GREECE,
CYPRUS, ROMANIA,
AND SLOVAKIA



POST-INDEPENDENCE KOSOVO

2008

The Republic of Kosovo declared its independence as a multi-ethnic state on Feb 17th.



2013

The Brussels Agreements and negotiations on normalisation (Berlin Process, Visa liberalisation, membership into intl bodies)

2020-Today

Today Fast moving

New challenges:

COVID | Changes of government | Ukraine War | Energy crisis & Climate change | EU-sponsored negotiations with Serbia.

ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

**IT'S MORE
THAN
WHAT IT
SEEMS**



Economic compensation on the basis of short-term projects



Travel, accommodation and expenses for fieldwork in Kosovo



Two workshops per cohort: one in Thessaloniki and one in Prishtina



In-depth guidance from supervisors



Support and arrangements from KFOS



Research new, fast-changing or underscored topics



Experience and insights for career building



Learning a combination of academic, policy-advisory and writing skills



Access to international audiences and key decision makers and stakeholders



Enriching one's outlook with local perspectives based on the ground



Socializing with peers sharing similar interests



KEY FACTS OF THE FELLOWSHIP



69

PROJECTS

Comprise this fellowship as of today. They were implemented by 56 researchers who have been individually guided by 7 supervisors.



13

PUBLICATIONS

resulted from 2017 and 2022. All of them are available online in three languages: English, Albanian and Serbian.



200+

PROMOTIONAL ARTICLES

were disseminated as op-eds or featured articles under this program in major global or regional media outlets. In some cases it was the first time that Kosovo received such coverage.

KEY FACTS OF THE FELLOWS / ALUMNI

32

YEARS OLD

is the average age of start for fellows of this fellowship. Only 25% of participants had obtained a PhD before joining. 75% work outside academia and 57% are women. By giving opportunities to young people, this network has been enriched with a broader perspective.

43%

OF RESEARCHERS

in the last two cohorts are native of Kosovo (9 out of 21). This shows a huge increase if compared with the same figure in the first two cohorts (3 out of 27) and responds to a strategy of nurturing local talent after an initial phase of attracting scholars from abroad.

22

LANGUAGES

are mastered and spoken among the KRAF alumni network. At least 12 of the languages had been employed to disseminate research. Among those, more than a dozen of articles have been written and read in Spanish, Greek and Romanian (non-recognizing countries).

EVOLUTION OF THE FELLOWSHIP

Dec 2016 Sep 2017	FIRST COHORT	1 EDITED VOLUME (ACADEMIC PAPERS)	16 projects selected. Focus: Non-recognisers and thematic approaches
May 2018 Nov 2018	SECOND COHORT	2 EDITED VOLUMES (1 ACADEMIC PAPERS + 1 BOOK WITH SELECTED OP-EDS)	11 projects selected. Focus: International affairs, security issues and internal dynamics.
May 2019 Dec 2019	THIRD COHORT	1 EDITED VOLUME	12 projects selected out of 56 applications. Focus: Balance between identity issues, social movements and international perspectives.
Oct 2020 Dec 2022	FOURTH COHORT: SPECIAL EDITION	9 POLICY BRIEFS WERE ISSUED IN PAIRS OF RESEARCHERS FROM WITHIN THE NETWORK	Focus: Thematic : Covid & Education / Spain – Kosovo relations / Sports and culture as state-building / Enlargement policy & Visa liberalisation / Corruption / Environmentalism.
Dec 2021 Jun 2022	FIFTH COHORT	1 EDITED VOLUME	12 projects selected out of 70 applications. Focus: Balancing issues of statehood with new challenges (Europe amid Ukraine war and energy crisis) and identity and education issues.
Nov 2022 May 2023	SIXTH COHORT	9 DIFFERENT POLICY BRIEFS	9 projects selected out of 53 applicants. Focus: Different projects following up priorities in Kosovo's agenda in a changing world (energy, digitalization).



KRAF stands out as one of KFOS' most impactful academic and policy initiatives. Furthermore, KRAF has played an important role in influencing Kosovo's foreign relations by engaging in academic research and publishing opinion pieces, particularly in countries that do not officially recognize Kosovo. KRAF serves as a tangible example of citizen diplomacy in action.

Lulzim Peci
Board member



The fellowship program aims to support early-stage researchers, initially drawing from non-recognizing countries to highlight Kosovo's post-independence progress. The program has since matured, nurturing talent, and promoting emerging research areas beyond statehood, such as energy and climate change. It also fosters a diverse research network and hosts networking events connecting fellows to policymakers, civil society organizations, and businesses in Kosovo.

Denion Galimuna,
Program Manager, KFOS

MEDIA OUTLETS THAT FEATURED RESEARCH FROM KRAF

More than two hundred articles of dissemination have been published or featured as part of this fellowship in the last decade. Kosovo appeared for the first time in certain media landscapes with a non-biased outlook. In the same fashion, articles derived from researchers appeared consistently in most media outlets covering the Western Balkans.

In Kosovo and the region:

Koha Ditore

Kosovo 2.0

Balkan Insight

Telegrafi

European Western Balkans

Osservatorio dei Balcani e Caucaso

Balkanist

New Eastern Europe

New-perspektiva.com

International:

Marca (Spain)

El Pais (Madrid)

The Independent (UK)

The Conversation

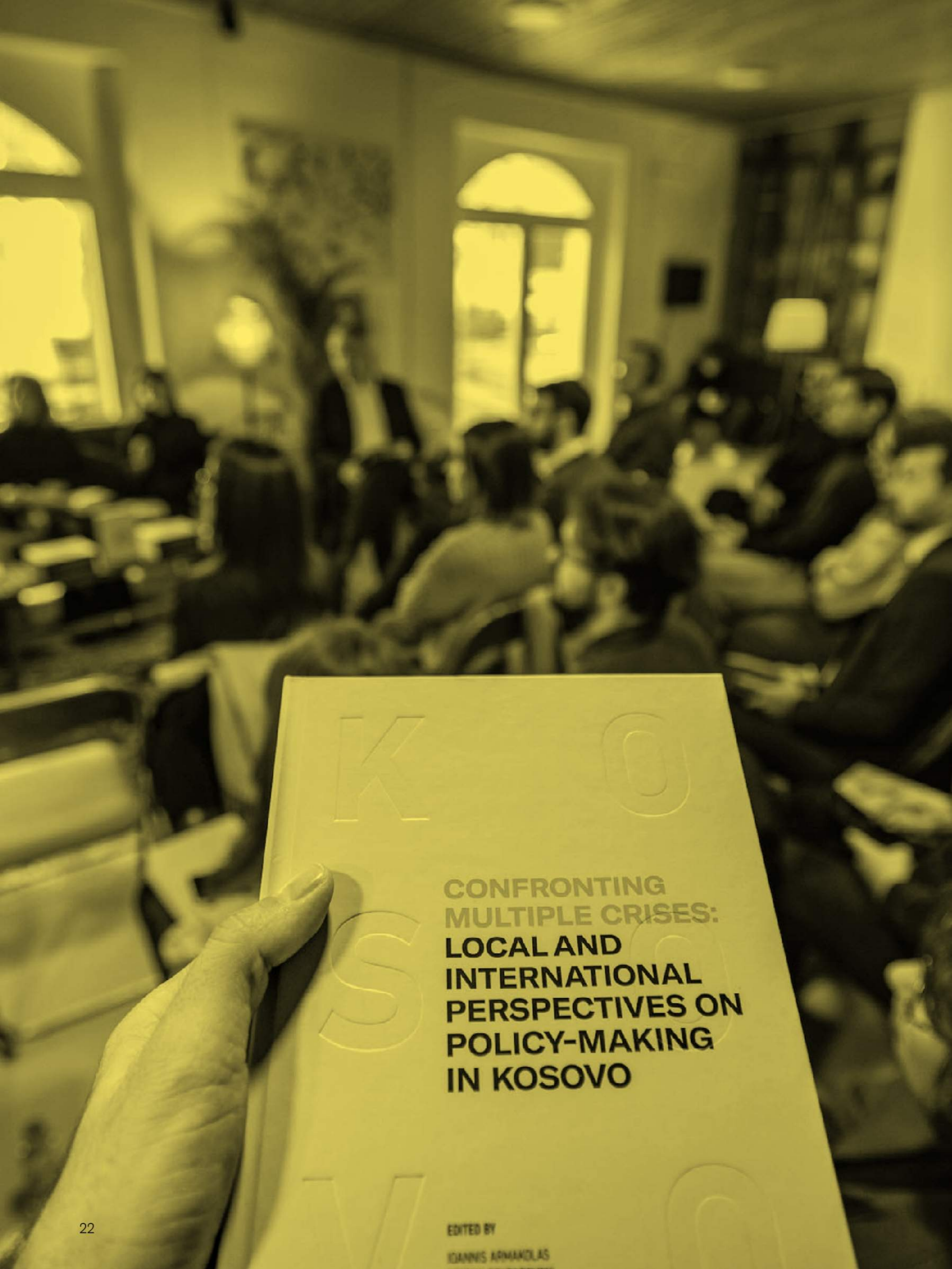
The Washington Post (US)

Deutsche Welle

Legal Political Studies

The Diplomat

ABOUT THE FELLOWS



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**CONFRONTING
MULTIPLE CRISES:
LOCAL AND
INTERNATIONAL
PERSPECTIVES ON
POLICY-MAKING
IN KOSOVO**

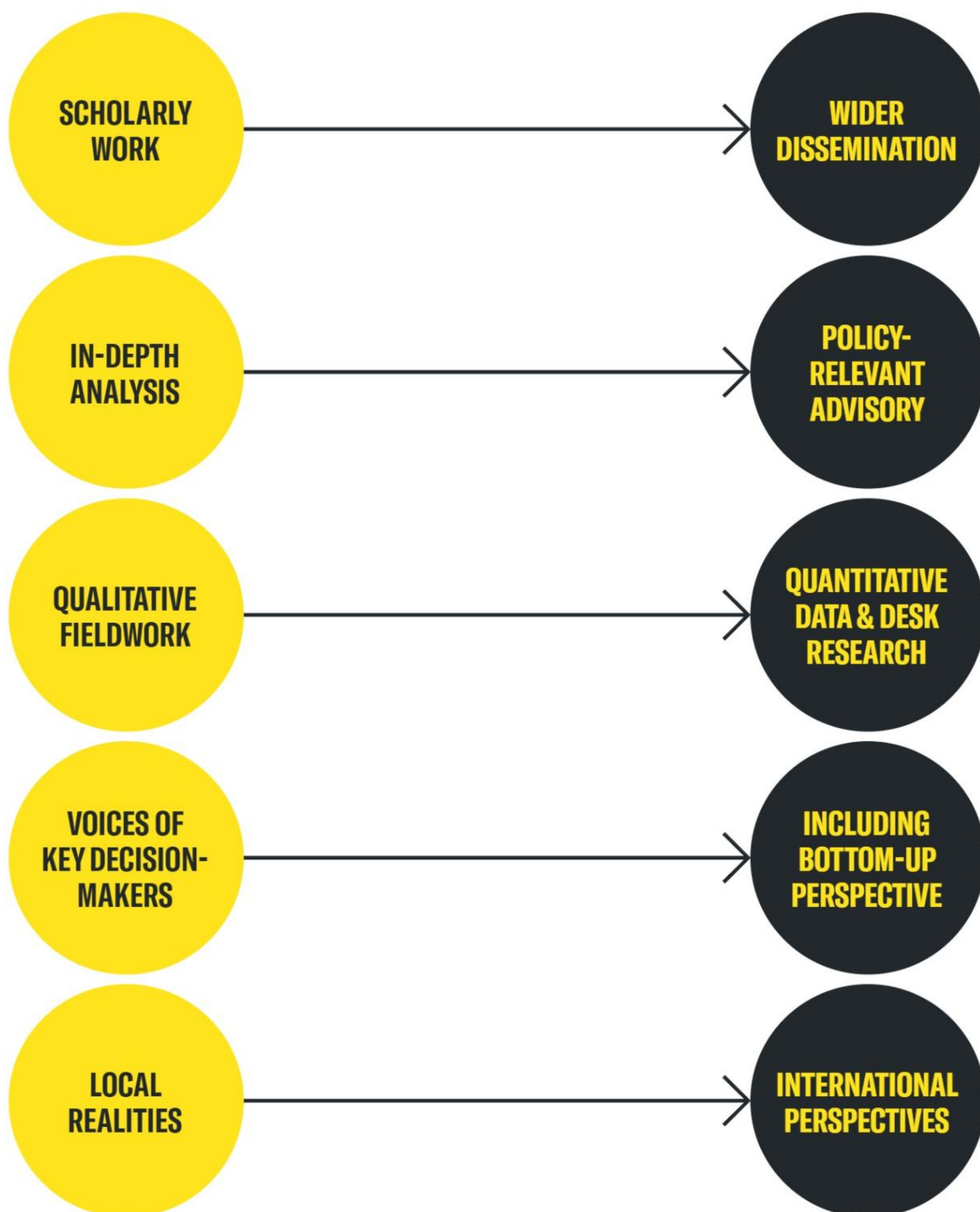
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IOANNIS ARMAKOLAS

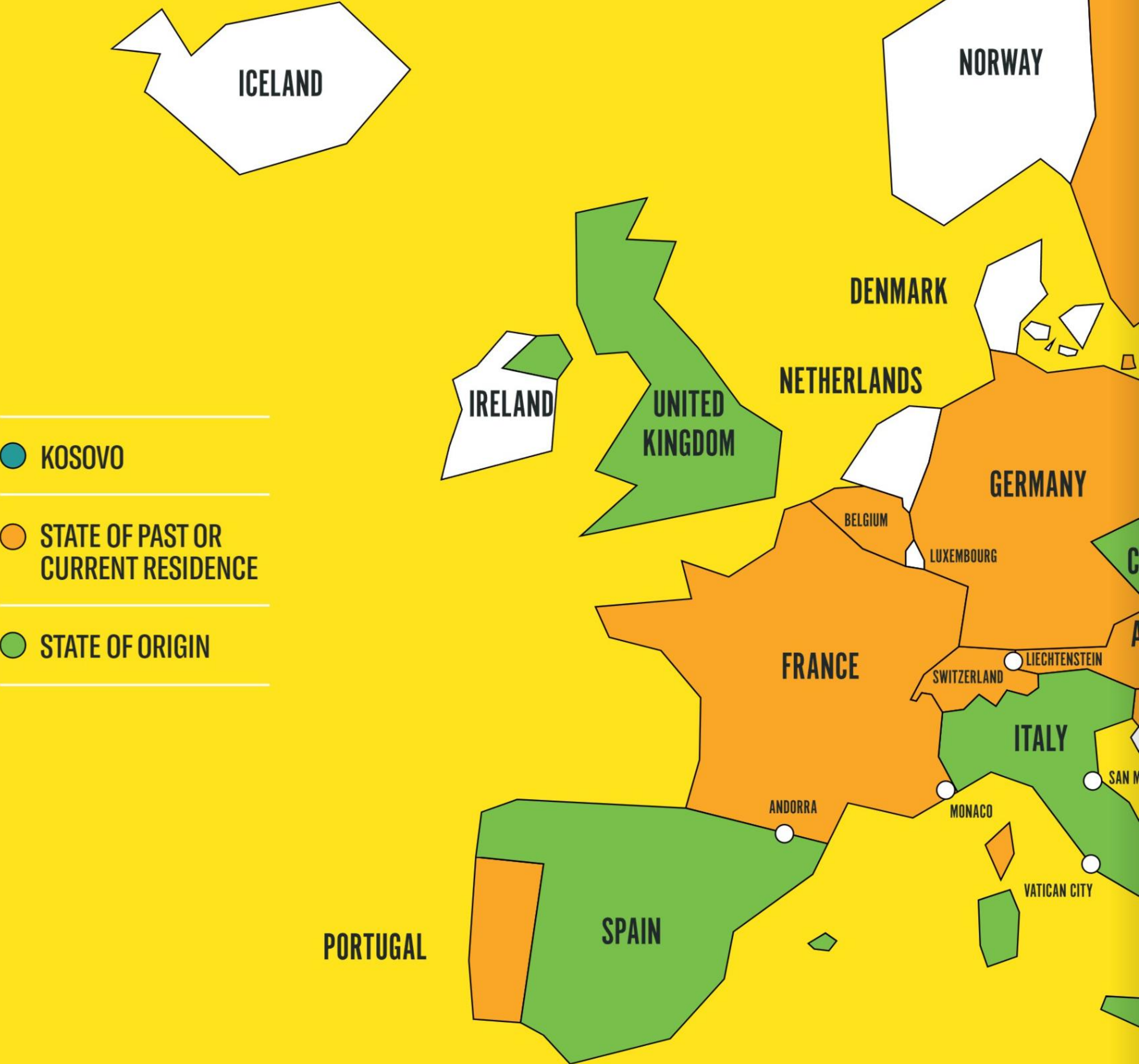
FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

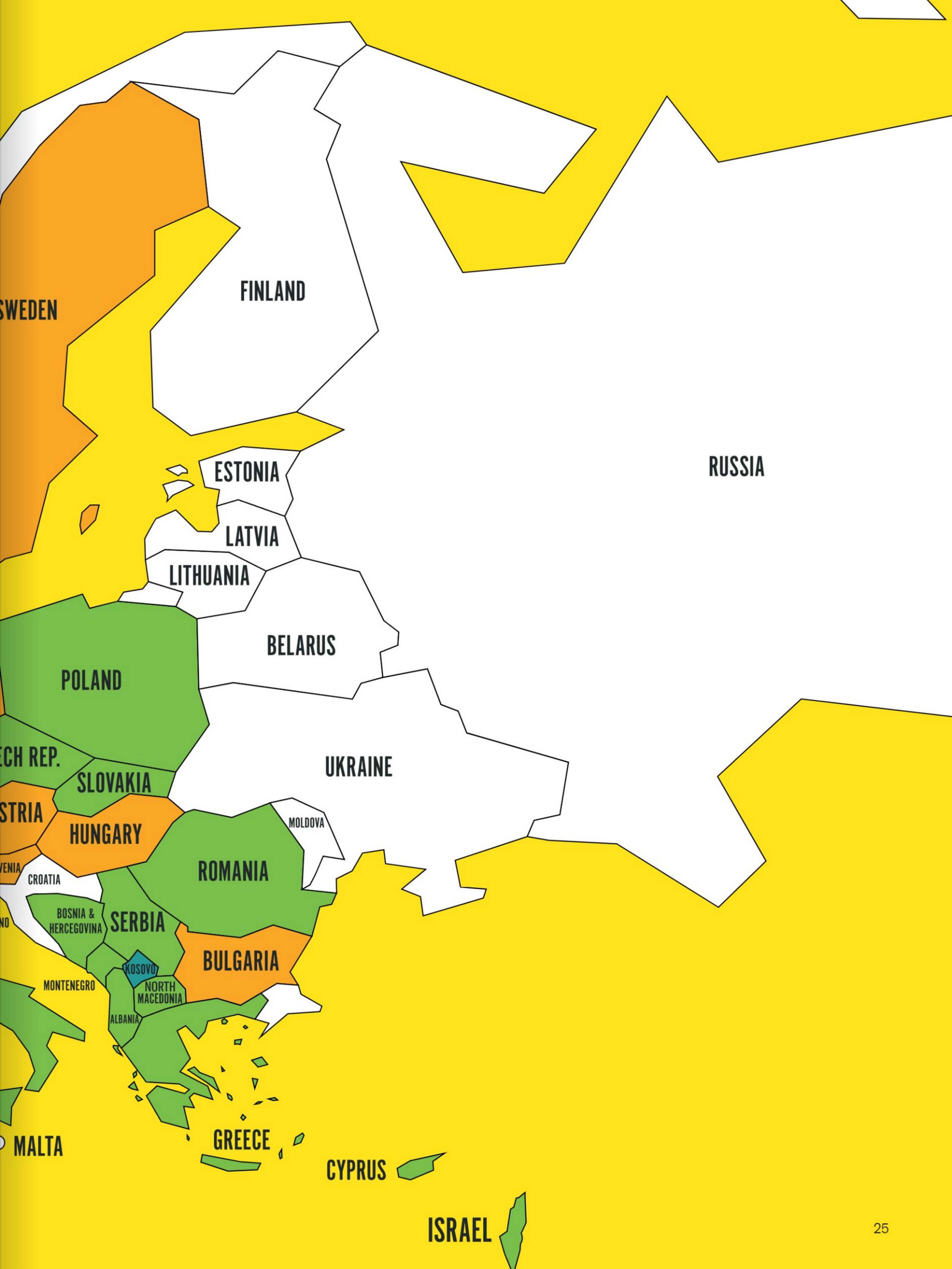
We believe in diversity in every regard. That is why we foster different approaches and look for the right balance both at the time of selecting profiles and in mentoring their projects. One characteristic of this fellowship resides specifically in its capacity of pooling together researchers that are different not only in their origins but also in regard to their aims, work backgrounds, goals and methods.



MAPPING INTERNATIONAL TEAMWORK

WHERE DO RESEARCHERS COME FROM?





SWEDEN

FINLAND

ESTONIA

LATVIA

LITHUANIA

BELARUS

RUSSIA

POLAND

UKRAINE

CZ REP.

SLOVAKIA

AUSTRIA

HUNGARY

MOLDOVA

ROMANIA

ITALY

CROATIA

SERBIA

BOSNIA & HERCEGOVINA

BULGARIA

KOSOVO

NORTH MACEDONIA

MONTENEGRO

ALBANIA

MALTA

GREECE

CYPRUS

ISRAEL



INITIAL FOCUS: NON-RECOGNIZERS



It was important to us to be among the first voices who have researched and written about Kosovo in the Spanish language. That put us in a pioneering position that we can claim now. In my case, in particular, this fellowship brought me a lot of career opportunities in the following years.

— **Pol Vila Sarria (Spain)**



No matter how close they are, cultural contacts between Greece and Kosovo are scarce. That's why our work of getting each part knowing the other is so important! I organized events with students, and we tried to debunk a series of stereotypes of how Albanians are in Greek society.

— **Mary Drosopoulos (Greece)**



All the activities we organize with Romanian media and at my university helped the interested public to find out more accurate information about Kosovo, the status of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and to debunk many of the myths propagated by nationalists about Romania's fears for its own secessionist movements.

— **Miruna Butnaru Troncota (Romania)**



In Cyprus information about Kosovo is almost nonexistent and, of course, filtered by our own situation of a divided island. I really appreciate the fact of being selected because they acknowledge the fact that, coming from Turkish Cyprus, my possibilities to write in Greek and influence authorities of the official Republic of Cyprus were more than limited.

— **Cemaiye Beysoylu (Cyprus)**



In my experience, Slovak public is not aware of the situation in Western Balkans in general. Then, contacts I made during this project helped me reach some of the politicians in other Balkans countries and, lastly, my travels through the Balkans influenced me as a writer: I wrote short stories about how it is to live in a divided society with memories still full of violence.

— **Miroslava Kulkova (Slovakia)**

CURRENT FOCUS: NEW ISSUES



Kosovo is facing a key critical juncture: given the specificities of its energy sector and overall political situation, it needs to develop an ambitious energy policy that is both climate proof and socially just. That is the only available path also due to the complex infrastructural legacies from the past.

— **Stefan Bouzarovski, Supervisor.**



The main driver of this energy focus is the reality of the structural changes that are needed to implement international climate change commitments, and the bleak alternative if we, as a global society, fail to do so.

— **Leke Batalli, 6th cohort.**



Our original areas of research were different but we found common interests in what was going on now, so we produced two policy papers: the first one about the educational system amid the COVID pandemic and a second paper about environmentalism as a means to boost circular economy-oriented social enterprises and education.

— **Gentiola Madhi & Francesco Trupia , 3rd cohort.**



Considering the Czech EU presidency, I hope I raised awareness about the ambiguity of the Czech policy towards the Western Balkans both within the international expert audience and domestically.

— **Petr Cermak, 6th cohort.**

A BRIDGE BETWEEN KOSOVO, THE REGION AND THE WORLD



I had good previous experiences related to Kosovo with the NGO sector and during my Master's, so I came here with no prejudices. However, as my research was on corruption in Kosovo one of the hardest parts of disseminating this in Serbia is to avoid making claims that could ignite anti-Albanian sentiments in local Serbian media.

— **Katarina Tadic (Serbia), 1st, 2nd & 6th cohort.**



China is arguably playing a major role in the region and Kosovo needs to understand the consequences of pursuing different foreign policy courses in relation to China. Europe is no longer the only arena where the Western Balkans need to protect and promote their interests.

— **Ana Krstinovska (North Macedonia), 6th cohort.**

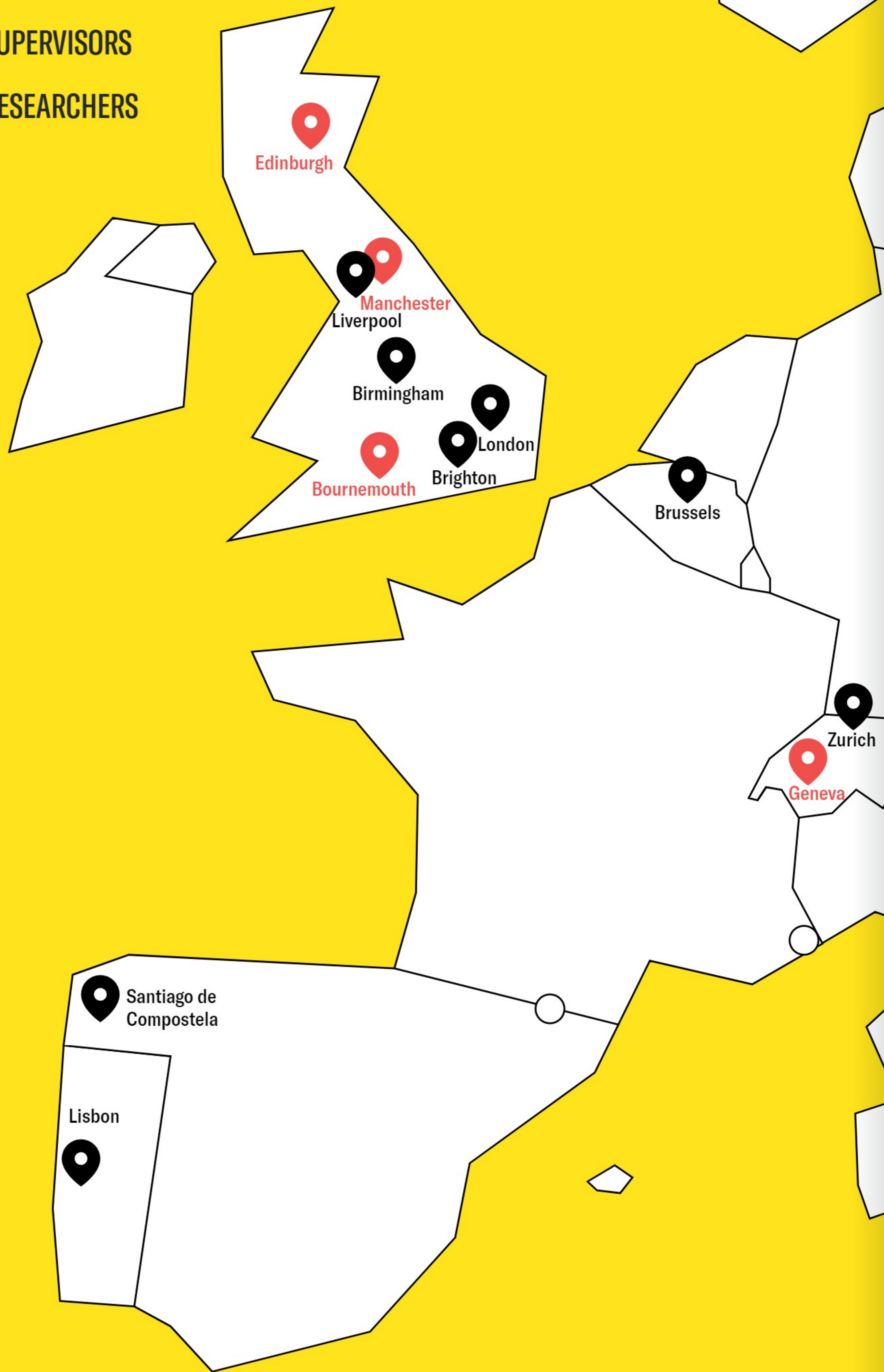


Whereas Spain proper doesn't recognise Kosovo, more than 185 million Spanish speakers live in states that do recognise it. In a digital world, it is key for Kosovo to seek Latin American audiences and engage with them via their geopolitical allies, like the US Hispanic community.

— **Juan Manuel Montoro (Uruguay / Spain), 3rd cohort.**

 CITY OF RESIDENCE OF SUPERVISORS

 CITY OF RESIDENCE OF RESEARCHERS





Berlin

Toruń

Warsaw

Prague

Graz

Cluj-Napoca

Verona

Bologna

Banja Luka

Sarajevo

Belgrade

Bucharest

Podgorica

Prishtina

Skopje

Tirana

Thessaloniki

Athens

Gine

LOCAL AND
INTERNATIONAL
DETERMINANTS
OF KOSOVO'S
STATEHOOD

LOCAL AND
INTERNATIONAL
DETERMINANTS
OF KOSOVO'S
STATEHOOD

**FOR THE
FUTURE**

PROVIDING YOUNG TALENT WITH OPPORTUNITIES:



The program contributed to my professional career: it expanded my media collaboration and coverage of political and social developments in Kosovo, besides being a specific research area to be further explored over time.

— **Gentiola Madhi, 3rd cohort**



Everyone who knows me a bit, knows I've been in Kosovo doing this fellowship. It was a great starting point for my career, and I really appreciate how productive my experience was there.

— **José Carpintero Molina, 3rd cohort**



I consolidated my knowledge and extended my network through this fellowship so it has sustained my academic and consultancy career.

— **Ervjola Selenica, 1st cohort**



I grew very fond of this program and I think it was very helpful also for my career. The mentorship received was precious and I appreciate this collaboration between young researchers and senior ones.

— **Damian Alexandru, 2nd cohort**

PROMOTING LOCAL LEADERSHIP

In KRAF we aim to nurture local talent and give opportunities to Kosovar voices. That is why we re-oriented our policy of offering mini-funding opportunities to outstanding candidates from Kosovo after an initial phase of promoting senior scholars from countries that do not recognise Kosovo.



As a supervisor working with a talented young group of researchers from Kosovo, I was struck by facts. First, this is an incredibly well-educated and well-equipped generation that also shows exceptional socio-political awareness. Second, in addition to providing a uniquely original and articulate local voice to academic and public debates, they have shown a keen interest in researching previously overlooked and underexplored topics, such as women-led businesses in Kosovo, post-Covid19 online teaching and learning, energy transition, women's role in civic resistance, negotiations and state-building.

— **Gëzim Krasniqi, supervisor**



This fellowship has been truly a valuable experience for youth in the region, offering them the chance to actively participate in research. The transformative experience at KRAF not only enhanced our self-confidence but also showcased the abundance of talented researchers, capable of addressing the data gap on Kosovo-related matters. Through our shared journeys, meaningful discussions, and the exchange of experiences, we have gained profound insights and are now empowered to embark on impactful projects.

— **Hana Bacaj, 5th cohort**

FOSTERING TEAMWORK AND SYNERGIES



I had the opportunity to meet and work with Arolda Elbasani, a scholar whom I admire and that inspired me and helped me with academic recommendations.

— **Miruna Butnaru Troncota,**
1st cohort and co-author of policy paper



I have learned research tools and methods for conducting ethnographic research. My academic supervisor, Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, was vital in understanding and employing that know-how during fieldwork.

— **Francesco Trupia,**
3rd cohort and co-author of policy paper



By chance, I am working with a KRAF fellow researcher on a separate regional project. This is important because it demonstrates how KRAF has connected us with individuals who work in projects in the same areas as we do in the region. It shows that the program goes beyond our initial focus, bringing people together and enabling us to explore new areas of common interest.

— **Hana Bacaj, 6th cohort**



My academic work concentrated on international relations and diplomacy and I did not expect to see my name under publications related to museums and football! But my collaborations with Luke Bacigalupo and Juan Manuel Montoro allowed me to explore new research territories.

— **George Kyriss,**
2nd cohort and co-author of policy paper.

ALUMNI NETWORK



Adelina Hasani



Adriana Cupcea



Alejandro Estesó Pérez



Alexandru Damian



Ana Krstinovska



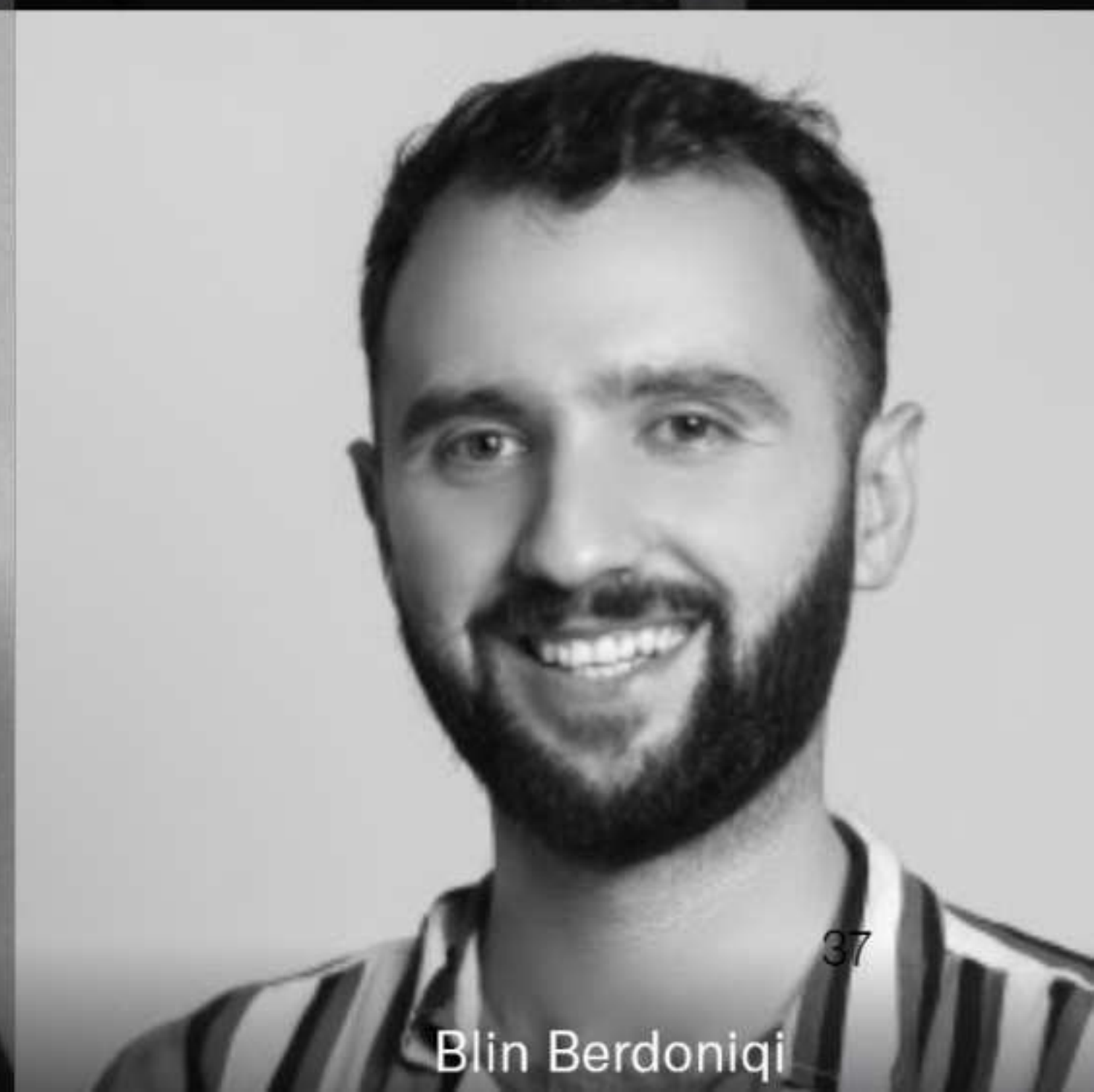
Ardit Orana



Arsild Tepelija



Atdhe Hetemi



Blin Berdoniqi



Boshko Stankovski



Cemaliye Beysoylu



Dita Dobranja



Donika Emiri



Donika Marku



Donjetë Murati



Doris Manu



Dr. George Kyris



Dr. Mary Drosopulos



Ervjola Selenica



Francesco Trupia



Geena Whiteman



Gentiola Madhi



Giorgos Triantafyllou



Hana Bacaj



Imane Bellaadem



Jeta Abazi Gashi



Jeta Krasniqi



José Carpintero Molina



Juan Manuel Montoro



Julianne Funk



Katarina Tadic



Lekë Batalli



Marta Spzala



Meris Musanovic



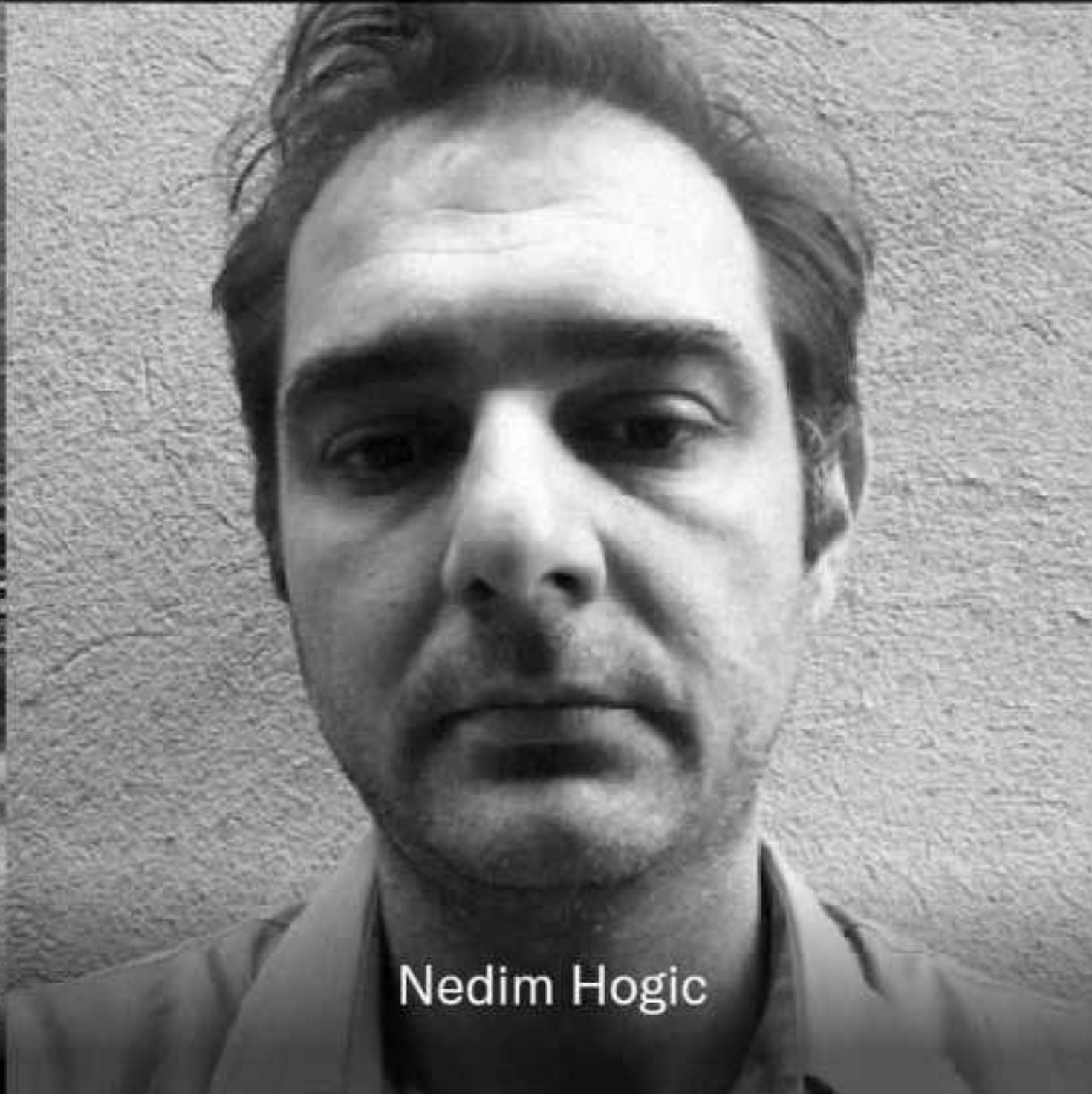
Miroslava Kulkova



Miruna Butnaru-Troncota



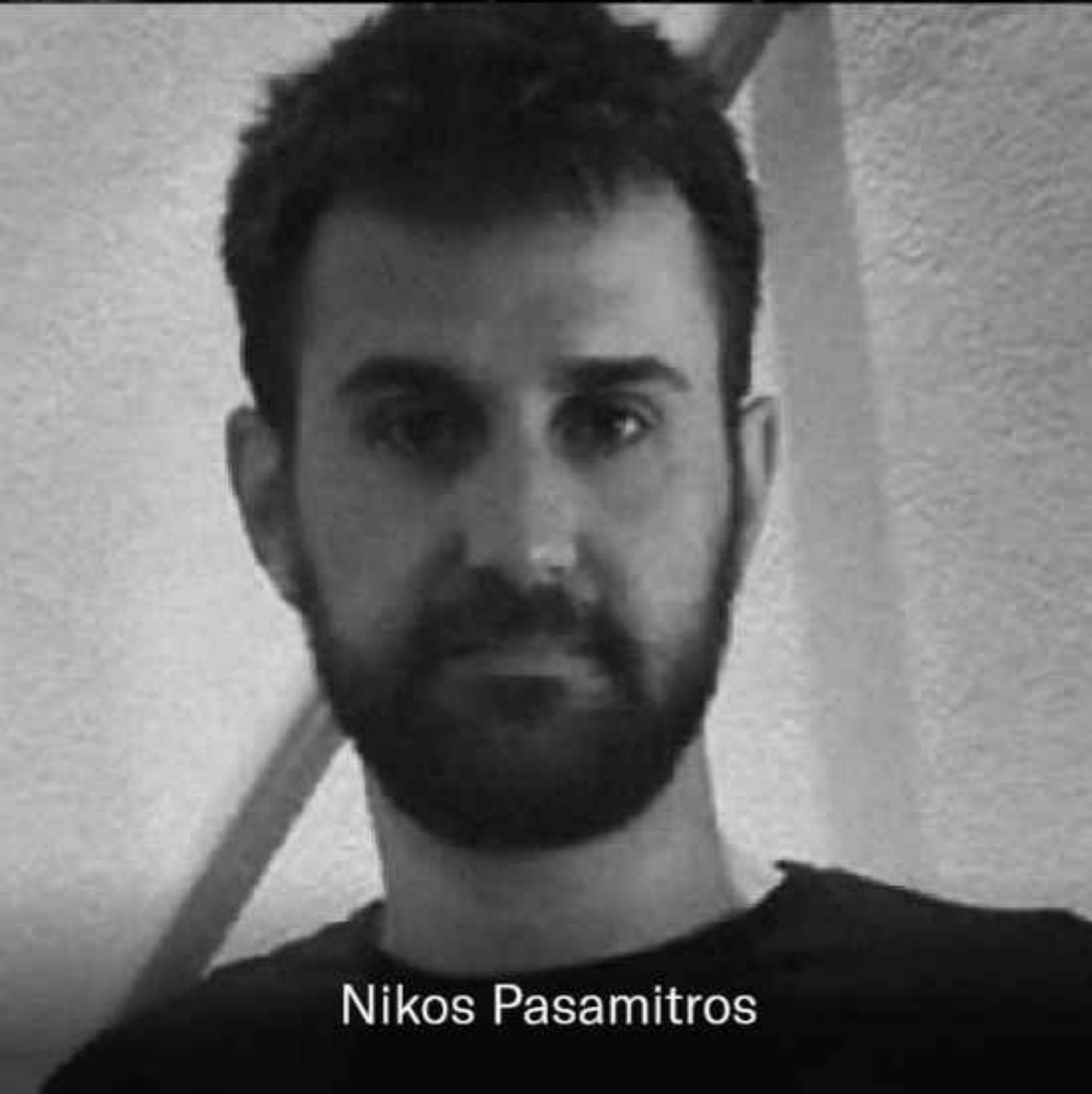
Narcisa Semić



Nedim Hogic



Nicasia Picciano



Nikos Pasamitros



Nora Nimani Musa



Petr Čermák



Pol Vila Sarriá



Pranvera Tika



Rados Musovic



Rodoljub Jovanović



Shkëlzen Gashi



Zoran Nechev



SUPERVISORS



Agon Demjaha



Arolda Elbasani



Dr. Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers



Gëzim Krasniqi



Ioannis Armakolas

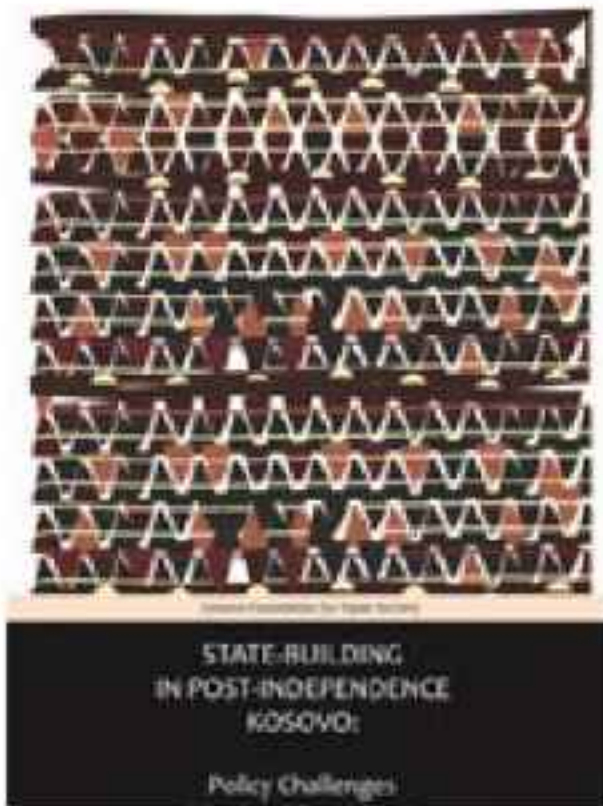


Stefan Bouzarovski



LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

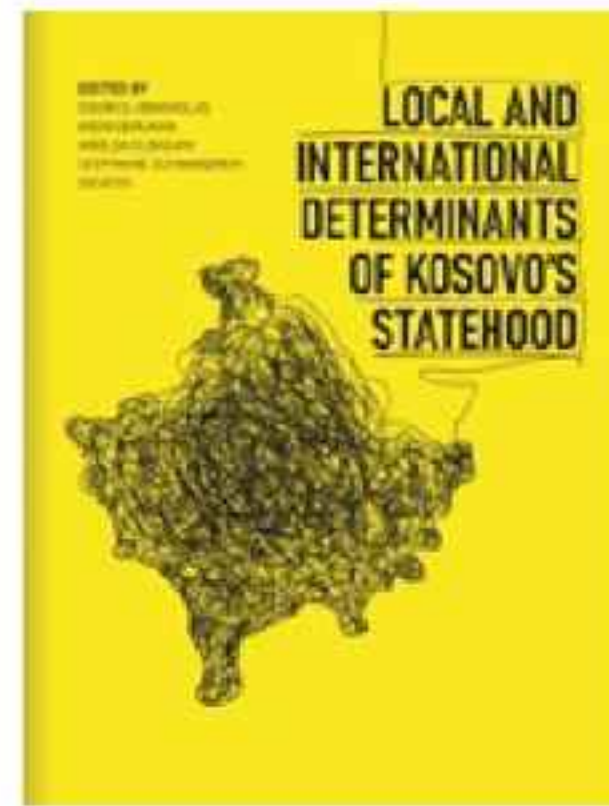
BOOKS



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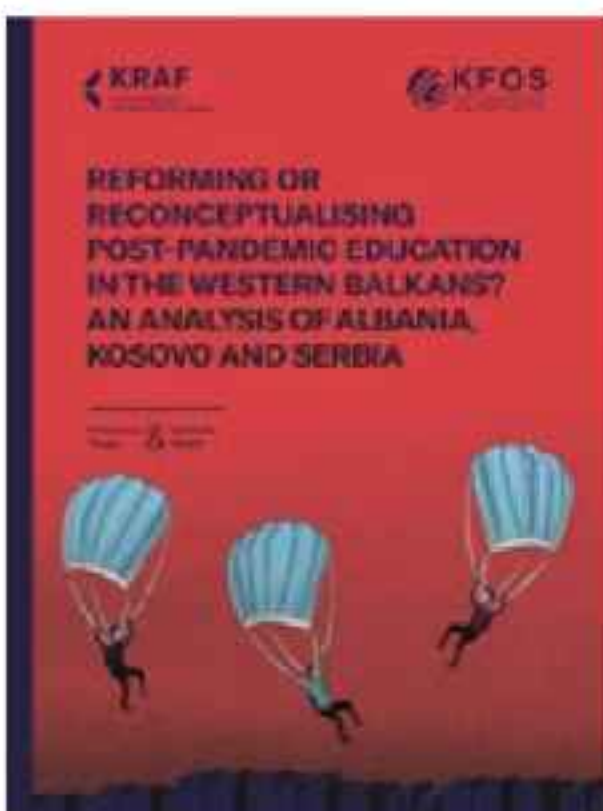
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COLLECTION OF OP-EDS



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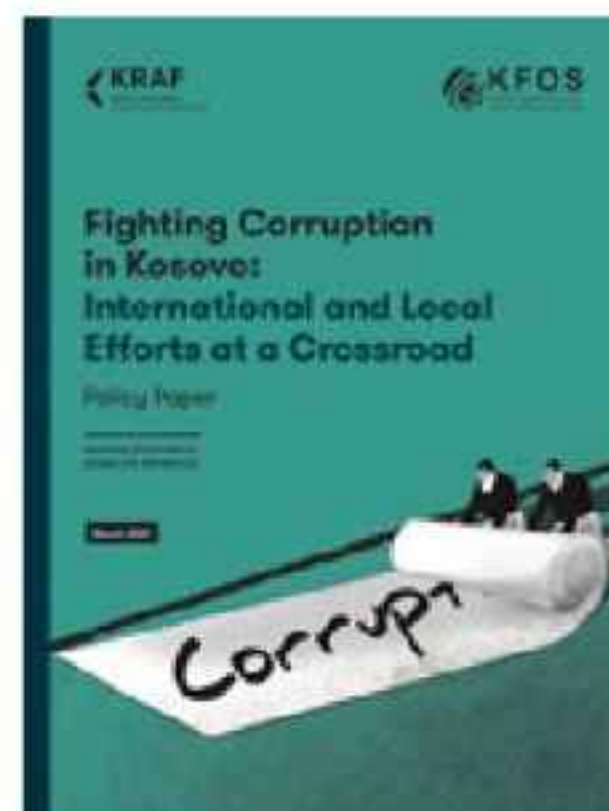
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1. Trupia, F. and G. Madhi (2021). *Reforming or Reconceptualising Post-Pandemic Education in the Western Balkans? An analysis of Albania, Kosovo and Serbia*. Prishtina: KFOS



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3. Picciano, N. and C. Beysoylu (2021). *Fighting Corruption in Kosovo: International and Local Efforts at a Crossroad*. Prishtina: KFOS



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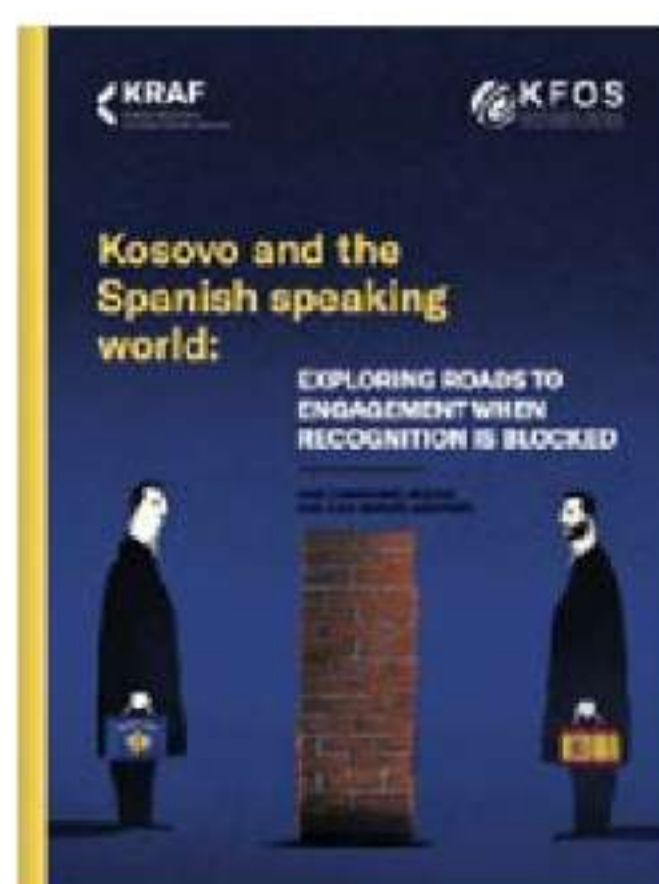


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POLICY PAPERS



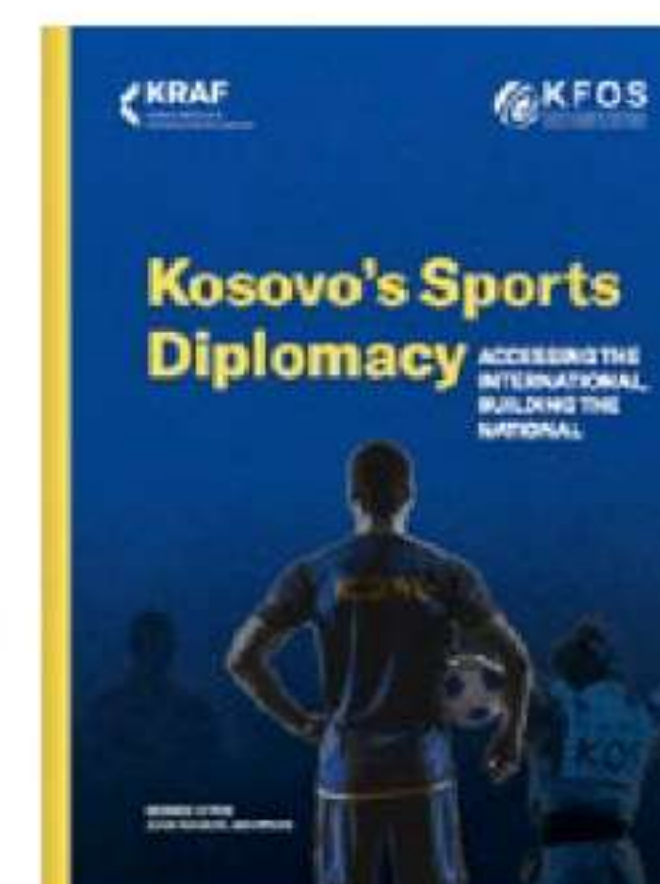
6. Nechev, Z. and D. Emini (2022). *Visa Liberalization: Kosovo's Saga on the EU Path*. Prishtina: KFOS



7. Carpintero Molina, J. and J. M. Montoro (2022). *Kosovo and the Spanish speaking world: Exploring roads to engagement when recognition is blocked*. Prishtina: KFOS

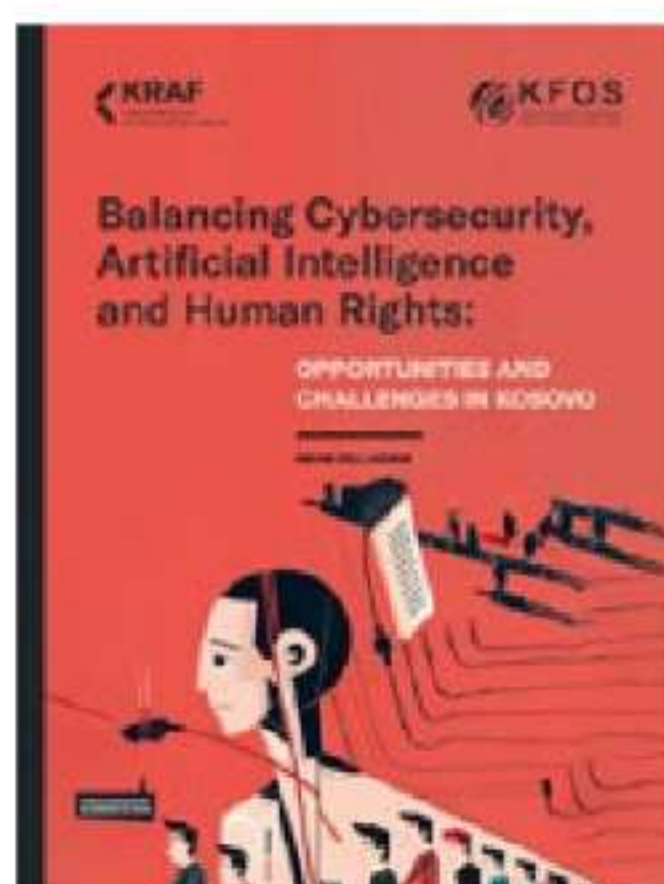


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9. Kyris, G. and J. M. Montoro (2022). *Kosovo's Sports Diplomacy: Accessing the international, building the national*. Prishtina: KFOS

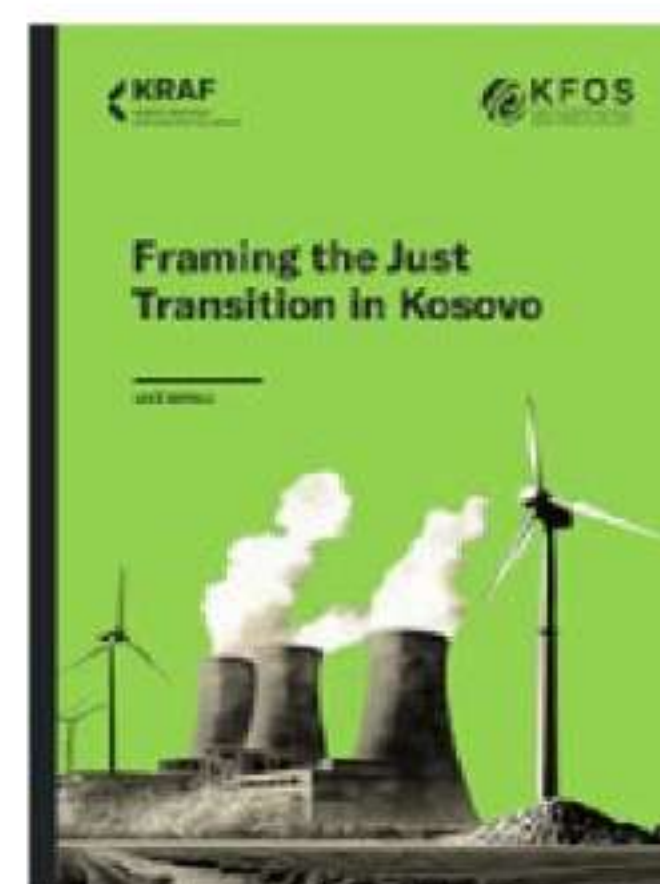
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1. Bellaadem, I. (2023). *Balancing Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights: Opportunities and Challenges in Kosovo*. Prishtina: KFOS.



2. Whiteman, G. (2023). *Young and Female: Experiences of and Barriers to Kosovo's 'Digital-Social' Start-Up Scene*. Prishtina: KFOS.



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