

OCTOBER, 2024

MONTHLY REPORT

METHODOLOGY

[New Social Initiative \(NSI\)](#) monitors media and social media in cooperation with [Pikasa Analytics INC](#), a data analytics company that develops and implements tools, software, and machine learning algorithms. The tool allows monitors to count the nominal number of articles on topics and see the level of audience engagement.

Engagements on websites are defined as news articles from each outlet's website shared on Facebook and the total number of likes, shares, and comments they have collected. Social media engagement encompasses likes, shares, and comments gathered from all social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn) for all posts, including photos, videos, and text. The assessment of engagement extends beyond the media outlets to encompass a variety of social media accounts, including those of politicians and opinion makers.

The tool aggregates articles, and the NSI monitoring team reviews them to identify potential disinformation and other information anomalies. However, the tool has several limitations. It is tailored, with Pikasa and NSI monitors handpicked for each observed account. Consequently, the total number of posts and articles includes only the observed accounts, excluding other accounts that may also be posting news. Engagement calculation consists of all shares, comments, and other interactions.

Moreover, private accounts can only be observed if officially designated as accounts of political leaders or fan pages. Consequently, some politicians' Facebook accounts may not be included in the analysis. Another limitation is related to access, as NSI can observe articles and posts published as far back as December 1, 2023.

Observed media that report from Kosovo in Serbian language

Alternativna, Gračanica online, Radio Kontakt Plus, Kosovo Online, KoSSev, Medija Centar, TV Most, Radio Kim, Radio Mitrovica Sever, Radio Televizija Gračanica, and RTK2

Observation period:

October 1 – October 31, 2024

The number of online media observed:

126 media reporting in Albanian and Serbian in Kosovo, 126 media reporting from Serbia, and 24 international media outlets

Monitoring goal:

Information disorders on the Internet and social media, including Websites, online news portals, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, in Kosovo, focusing on the Kosovo Serb information space.

Specific topics observed:

Alleged beating of the former President of Srpska List in North Mitrovica, allegations against Kosovo Prime Minister being a Serbian spy in the past, speculations in the media about the identity of suspects of different crimes in North Mitrovica, military cooperation between Kosovo and Turkey.

Key findings

- Overall, in October, not as many information disorders were observed as in the previous months
- The media disclosed the full names and photographs of alleged suspects in several criminal cases, forcing a public denial by the identified persons, illustrating an absence of journalistic due diligence.
- Tabloids like *Informer* used derogatory terms such as "Šiptarski monstrumi" and "banditi" in articles covering arrests in North Mitrovica, perpetuating ethnic hatred and escalating tensions. Likewise, the use of term "Shkije" was observed in the media reporting in Albanian.
- Anti-EU and anti-Turkey narratives were observed in media from Serbia. The anti-Turkey and anti-EU narratives highlight the ongoing use of disinformation and emotional appeals in the media to shape public opinion and strengthen regional polarization.
- Political tensions ahead of Kosovo's parliamentary elections resulted in an increase in speculative and unverified, potentially politically motivated claims designed to smear individuals.

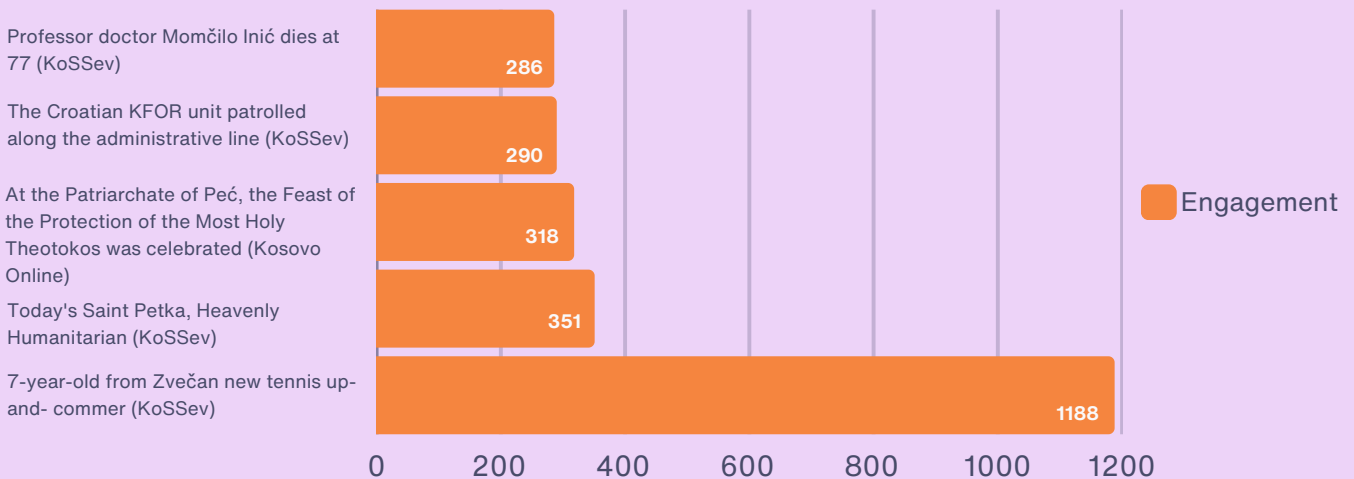
Monitoring results

During the reporting period, the most active media outlet reporting in Serbian language from Kosovo was Kosovo Online, which published 2898 articles with 33,990 engagements. The same website also recorded the most engagements on social media.

In the reporting period, Serbian-language media in Kosovo reported the most about the student protest in Nort Mitrovica (24 articles) and anonymous threats to the Tanjug news agency from Serbia (21 articles). Other notable topics included the meeting of the chief negotiators of Kosovo and Serbia under the auspices of the EU (19 articles) and the Slađan Trajković trial (17 articles). None of the most reported topics made it to the audience favorites on Facebook. The Facebook audience was the most engaged with articles related to religious holidays.

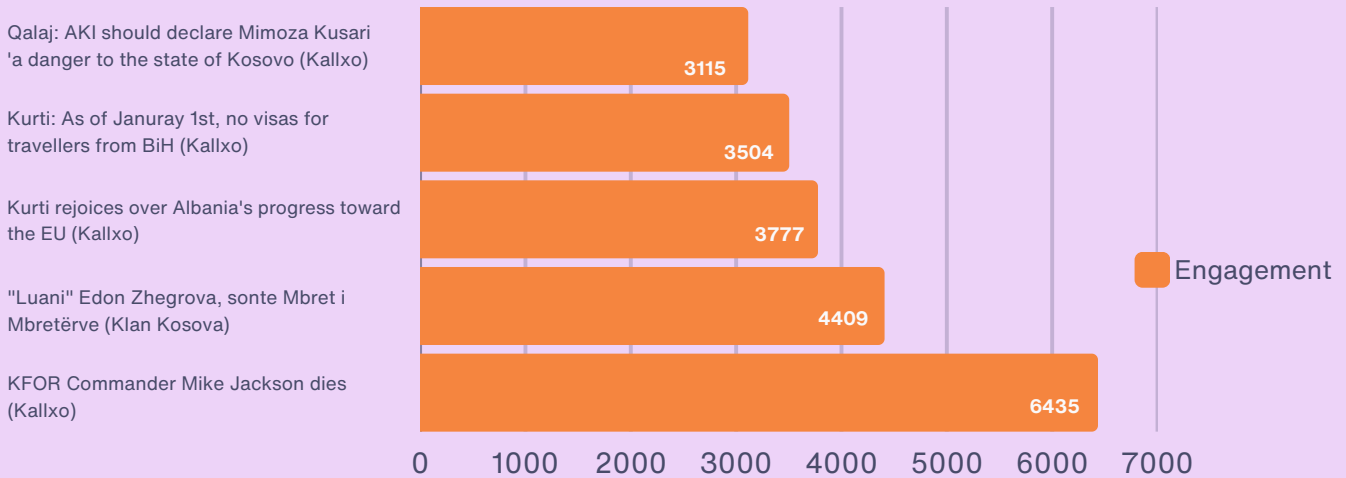
Since May 2024, media reporting in the Serbian language has seen an overall decrease in engagement levels. August 2024 saw a slight increase in audience engagement on Facebook compared to July 2024. However, a new decrease in engagements was recorded in September 2024 compared to August. The declining trend continued in October when recorded engagements were considerably lower than those recorded in the first half of 2024.

Popular articles in Serbian language on Facebook



As is usually the case, there were no overlaps in the most reported topics in Serbian and Albanian-language media in Kosovo. Media that report in Albanian had the most articles (546) written about the salary increase announcement by the Government of Kosovo, followed by Kurti’s meetings at the Berlin Summit, primarily with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (433), and 425 articles written about the physical attack against the Mayor of Peja, Gazmend Muhaxheri. Finally, 393 articles were written in Albanian about the tragic car accident that claimed three lives. The topics that were covered most did not garner the most audience engagement. When examining the most popular individual articles on Facebook, political articles topped the list of the most engaging topics.

Popular articles in Albanian language on Facebook



During the reporting period, the most active media outlet reporting in Albanian language from Kosovo was Bota Sot, which published 9,377 articles with 45,091 engagements. However, the website that recorded the most engagements on social media was Klan Kosova, with 168,089 engagements, on 5,421 published articles in October.

In October, a series of speculative articles about the alleged beating of the former President of Srpska List, Goran Rakić, appeared in the media in Kosovo. While different sources corroborated the story, the police never confirmed the event. Some media went as far as to reveal the full name of the alleged suspect,¹ who was forced to deny the claims publicly, and no legal actions were taken. The beating was also blamed on Civil Protection, a former organization the Government of Kosovo has declared as still active and terrorist. The series of articles also accused the current President of Srpska List, Zlatan Elek, of allegedly covering up the beating.

Another suspect was also forced to deny media claims about the alleged confiscation of weapons in his home and his alleged escape from the police. Namely, during raids in several locations in North Mitrovica, among other things one AK-47 rifle and two hand grenades were confiscated² by the police. Some media proceeded to publish full name and the photograph of one of the suspects in airsoft equipment, one media title stated, “This is the Serb arrested today in the north by Kosovo Police, weapons were seized³ and he had a notorious plan”. The suspect was forced to, through his lawyer, deny arrest and explain

1 <https://teve1.info/kp-sulmohet-goran-rakig/> and <https://indeksonline.net/sulmohet-brutalisht-ish-kryetari-i-listes-srpska-goran-rakig/> and <https://kossev.info/jaksic-javna-tajna-da-je-rakic-pretucen-u-mitrovici-prelom-ruke-i-savovi-na-glavi/> and <https://www.radiokosovaelire.com/ish-kryetari-i-listes-serbe-tani-deputet-ne-parlamentin-e-serbise-goran-rakig-eshte-rrahur-nga-mbrojtja-civile/>
 2 <https://epizet.com/ky-eshte-serbi-i-arrestuar-sot-ne-veri-nga-policia-e-kosoves-i-kapet-armatim-dhe-kishte-nje-plan-famekeq/> and <https://indeksonline.net/ekskluzive-ky-eshte-serbi-i-arrestuar-sot-ne-veri-nga-policia-e-kosoves-i-kapet-armatim-dhe-kishte-nje-plan-famekeq-1/>
 3 <https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti-optuzbe-protiv-a-i-nakon-zaplene-oruzja-on-tvrdisu-predmeti-iz-airsofta/>

that in his house, during the raid, only airsoft equipment was seized, and no lethal weapons were found.

As parliamentary elections approach, an increase in attempts to smear the image of politicians will likely rise; in November, an article which reports on statements made by Ramush Haradinaj, leader of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), accusing Prime Minister Albin Kurti of being a Serbian spy⁴ during his time with the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK) was observed that may suggest political motivation. Haradinaj's allegations are presented without concrete evidence or corroborative sources, relying solely on his assertions. The same insinuation has been alleged by Haradinaj several times in the past and the media continue to amplify these unverified and speculative claims.

When it comes to the Serbian media, the most problematic article in terms of information disorders was observed in tabloid Informer. In an article titled "Šiptar monsters have finally shown mercy! House arrest lifted for four Serbian boys! However, nothing is over yet!"⁵ Informer reported that the Kosovo police arrested four Serbian youths in North Mitrovica between September 9 and 10, alleging they attacked an official on duty. Following their arrest, they were placed under house arrest. The article also tries to make a connection between Kosovo Prime Minister's Albin Kurti's visit to North Mitrovica and the arrests of the youngsters. The article uses pejorative terms such as "Šiptarski monstrumi" (derogatory term for Albanians meaning "Albanian monsters") and "banditi" ("bandits") to describe Kosovo police officers, which is inflammatory and offensive.



Similar tone and hateful language was observed in an article by Vaseljenska TV⁶ which heavily criticised Turkey's military industry support to Government of Kosovo with sales of military grade equipment and promises of establishing a defence industry in Kosovo. The article suggests that Turkey's actions are part of a broader strategy to assert influence in the Balkans, potentially destabilizing the region and posing a threat to Serbia and

⁴ <https://balkaninfo.info/haradinaj-kurti-ishte-splun-i-serbise-ne-kohen-kur-sheerbente-ne-uck/>

⁵ <https://informer.rs/politika/vesti/957080/ukinut-kućni-pritvor-za-četvoricu-srpskih-dečaka>

⁶ <https://vaseljenska.net/2024/10/06/droneri-ракете-i-milioni-evra-sta-se-krije-iza-turske-podrške-siptarskim-militantima-na-kosovu-i-metohiji/>

neighboring countries. It also uses derogative terms such as “Šiptar“ and „Albanian militants“.

In addition to anti-Turkey narratives, anti-EU narratives were also observed in an article by Večernje Novosti⁷ titled: „BRUSSELS IS ANNOYED BY AID TO THE SERBS, ON THE TERROR OF ŽMURA: EU warns Belgrade for adopting two laws on Kosovo“. The article refers to EU’s criticism that the intentions of Serbia to adopt laws that imply its jurisdiction over Kosovo is a violation of the Ohrid Agreement labelling it as EU’s push back on Serbia’s intention to provide a package of social assistance to its citizens residing in Kosovo. However, the introduction of this social assistance packages did not in fact require a new law and Serbia was able to do it through sub-legal acts which there was no opposition to. At the same time, the article claims that Pristina was not reminded of its obligations in the Dialogue, which is not true, as western officials almost weekly warn Kosovo of its obligations.

Overall, the use of term “Šiptar” was observed in 5 articles in the media from Serbia. Similarly, derogative term for Serbs “Shkije” was observed in 6 articles, all of which were reporting on a message prompted by football hooligans who were opposing the idea of Serbia and Albania co-organising a EU21 football competition.

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In addition, graffiti aimed at discrediting a witness in the war crimes case against Kosovo Liberation Army commanders appeared in Pristina in October and it also used the derogatory term for Serbs.

⁷ <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/1424423/briselu-smeta-pomoc-srbima-teror-zmure-opominju-beograd-zbog-usvajanja-dva-zakona-kim>

⁸ <https://kalko.com/lajm/grafitet-me-mesazhe-denjguese-ndaj-fadil-gecit-platforma-liria-ka-emer-nuk-merremi-me-denjgrimin-e-askujt/>

This report is prepared by New Social Initiative, a civil society organization from North Mitrovica to ultimately impact inclusiveness, trust-building, democratization processes and good governance in Kosovo. While doing so, NSI follows its vision of an inclusive society built on trust and appreciation among its communities, in which citizens from all ethnic groups actively participate in the society and its governance.