

KOSOVO AMERICAN EDUCATION FUND

Quarterly Newsletter, July 2024



Rina Bulliqi, University of North Carolina '24

FOUNDER'S REFLECTIONS ON KAEF'S JOURNEY

As KAEF celebrates its 20th anniversary, former USAID Mission Director in Kosovo and founder of KAEF, **Mr. Dale Pfeiffer**, was invited to share KAEF's origin story and its impact on Kosovo's development:



“ The inspiration behind the Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF) was the realization that while Kosovars who had re-established public institutions and taken on the roles of energizing the economy after 1999 had achieved a remarkable start in creating a democracy and vibrant business sector, the education system was not producing the skills needed for the future. When USAID received almost eight million dollars from the sale of the American Bank of Kosovo, the USAID Mission in Prishtina was asked how they wanted to use these funds. The obvious decision was to create a mechanism to provide opportunities for the country's best and brightest to study in America and acquire the knowledge to become the next generation of leaders.

Thus, the KAEF fellowship was formed and has seen this model program provide Kosovo with the benefits of exposure to new ideas and methods, generating change in both public and private sectors as fellows have returned to apply their knowledge. KAEF fellowships were awarded to those whose academic or professional experience and aspirations demonstrated their potential to be leaders and game-changers in Kosovo's future, with selection based solely on these qualifications. The results have energized business growth and development and injected modern thinking and skills into the way the government carries out its roles in supporting growth.

Today, KAEF fellows are widely recognized as effective 'change agents' as Kosovo becomes a respected and successful nation that has largely erased the wounds of the past and demonstrates its readiness and capability to join with other nations in the world to support the peace and prosperity long absent in the Balkans. KAEF continues to contribute to this successful transformation, further strengthening the bond between Kosovo and the United States.

“...to provide opportunities for the country's best and brightest to study in America and acquire the knowledge to become the next generation of leaders.”

LOOKING BACK AT KAEF'S FIRST COHORT

As KAEF celebrates its 20th anniversary, the journey of its first cohort is worth reflecting upon. This group laid the foundation for the 107 scholars who followed, shaping the future of KAEF. Seb, part of this first cohort, shares his thoughts on the lasting influence of KAEF on his career in research and policy, highlighting the profound impact on his professional journey and personal growth:



From left to right: **Edmond Mjekiqi** (Duke University), **Vilaznim Bytyqi** (University of Delaware), **Seb Bytyci** (Indiana University), **Artan Tigani** (Rochester Institute of Technology), **Artan Ajazaj** (The George Washington University), **Teuta Kacaniku** (Tufts University), **Aleksandar Radic** (Rochester Institute of Technology), **Fortuna Haxhikadrja** (Duke University)



SEB BYTYCI Indiana University, 2005

“KAEF has proven to be the most impactful scholarship in Kosovo. Its graduates have made great strides in a wide number of areas. I, certainly, am greatly indebted to KAEF for my success in the fields of research and policy. My experience in the United States has been profound and will always be a source of inspiration for me.

CELEBRATING CLASS OF 2024



HANA BEKTESHI

Law, George Washington University



DEBORA PECI

MPA, Syracuse University



RINA BULLIQI

MBA, University of North Carolina

KAEF ALUMNAE AT TRADE WINDS FORUM

May 13th, 2024 - KAEF alumnae Hana Bacaj (Vanderbilt University '20) and Erëza Gjickolli (Bentley University '21) were part of the delegation of women business leaders at the Women's Economic Security Regional Workshop and Trade Winds Trade Mission & Business Development Forum that took place in Istanbul, Türkiye.

This initiative, sponsored by the Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) in cooperation with the International Trade Administration (ITA), aims to support women's economic security in the Balkans region and address critical issues hindering the ability of women and girls to fully, meaningfully, and equally contribute to, and benefit from, economic growth and global prosperity.



The forum, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce's 14th annual Trade Winds mission, brought together over 120 U.S. businesses to explore opportunities for investment and partnerships. The event featured tailored business-to-government meetings with U.S. commercial diplomats and trade experts from over 30 countries across Europe and Eurasia, along with plenary sessions and networking events.

GOVERNMENT OF KOSOVO SUPPORTS KAEF

May 21st, 2024 - In its 206th meeting, the Government of Kosovo allocated €100,000 to the Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF), highlighting the government's continued support for the program's role in promoting post-graduate educational opportunities for Kosovar students.

Administered by American Councils for International Education, KAEF has supported over 115 Kosovar students in attending more than 40 leading universities in the United States since its establishment in 2004. As KAEF celebrates its 20th anniversary, this allocation will contribute to providing life-changing post-graduate educational opportunities for Kosovar youth.

The KAEF community expresses immense gratitude to the Government of Kosovo for their continued support and recognition of the program's significance in nurturing future leaders equipped with the skills to drive Kosovo's economic development.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



GRANIT LIMANI

**MBA, International Business
St. John's University, 2016**

Granit Limani is an entrepreneur with extensive experience in business, education, art, media, and technology. He co-founded his first company, Entermedia, in 2004 at the age of 18, working with clients worldwide. Upon returning to Kosovo, he established Sonnecto, a tech support company providing employment opportunities for hundreds of Kosovars.

"KAEF gave me a closer look into the world of international business, from the stock market's corporations to the innovative startups in Europe and beyond."



FESTA STAVILECI

**LLM, Business Law
Duke University School of Law, 2023**

Festa Stavileci is a legal expert with experience in Corporate, Commercial, and Technology Law. She currently serves as the Legal Expert for the Secretariat of the National Council for Economy and Investments, addressing regulatory challenges in the business environment. She previously worked as a junior legal associate at RPHS Law and interned at the New York Legal Assistance Group's Consumer Protection Unit.

"Studying at such a prestigious university through the KAEF scholarship revealed to me the boundless opportunities that lie ahead and inspired me to bring the spirit of US corporate culture back to Kosovo."

KOSTT SUPPORTS KAEF

July 26th, 2024 - Evetar Zeqiri, CEO of KOSTT, and Gjeni Shporta, Country Director of American Councils Kosova, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in support of the Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF). KOSTT, responsible for the planning, operation, maintenance, and development of Kosovo's electricity transmission system, has committed to a financial contribution to advance KAEF's mission. Mr. Zeqiri emphasized the significance of this support, stating:

“ Supporting the academic and professional development of young people is an investment in Kosovo's human capital. We believe that well-educated and trained youth will be the pillars of future development, bringing new knowledge and perspectives that will help build a brighter future for our country.

KOSTT remains dedicated to supporting new generations by providing access to education and professional development, contributing to creating equal opportunities for all. KOSTT encourages other public enterprises and companies to support initiatives that aim to build the skills needed for Kosovo's economic and social growth.

The KAEF community expresses immense gratitude to KOSTT for their continued support throughout the years.



AMERICAN COUNCILS HIGHLIGHTS KAEF ALUMNI

To celebrate its 50th anniversary, American Councils for International Education has announced the "50 Alumni for 50 Years" initiative, spotlighting exceptional alumni from its extensive portfolio of 250 programs over the past five decades. Among these distinguished honorees are two KAEF alumni, Valdrin Lluka and Zana Zeqiri Rudi. Here is their advice for future participants of American Councils' programs:



VALDRIN LLUKA
University of Minnesota, 2009

Valdrin strongly encourages current and future participants of American Councils' programs to embrace every opportunity offered. *"The network, knowledge, and experiences gained are invaluable. Be proactive in seeking mentorship, engage deeply with the diverse community, and always look for ways to apply what you learn to make a tangible impact in your field or community. Your journey with American Councils is not just about personal growth but also about how you can contribute to a more interconnected and understanding world."*



ZANA ZEQRIRI-RUDI
Harvard University, 2010

Zana underscores the value of engaging with American Councils' diverse and dynamic community of leaders and innovators. She points out the extensive support provided by American Councils during her studies, highlighting its role in fostering academic achievement and cultural understanding. Zana advocates for active participation in American Councils' community of further educational and cultural exchange goals and contributes to a legacy of global collaboration and learning.

BEHIND THE SCENES: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

As KAEF prepares to mark its 20th anniversary, here is a sneak peek at the upcoming celebration video. The video features interviews with alumni and KAEF founder, Dale Pfeiffer, capturing their stories and the impact KAEF has had on their lives.

The filming process has included a mix of insightful reflections and enjoyable moments. Alumni have shared their achievements and personal stories, showcasing the strong community that KAEF has built over the years.

This video aims to reflect the spirit and success of KAEF and will be premiered at the anniversary event. More information to come soon!





Kosovo American Education Fund

Learn more: kaef-online.org

To support our program, please visit:

[KAEF Donation Link](#)

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