

# KOSOVO AMERICAN EDUCATION FUND

*Quarterly Newsletter, September 2020*



*Anyla Rexhepi (Temple University '21)*



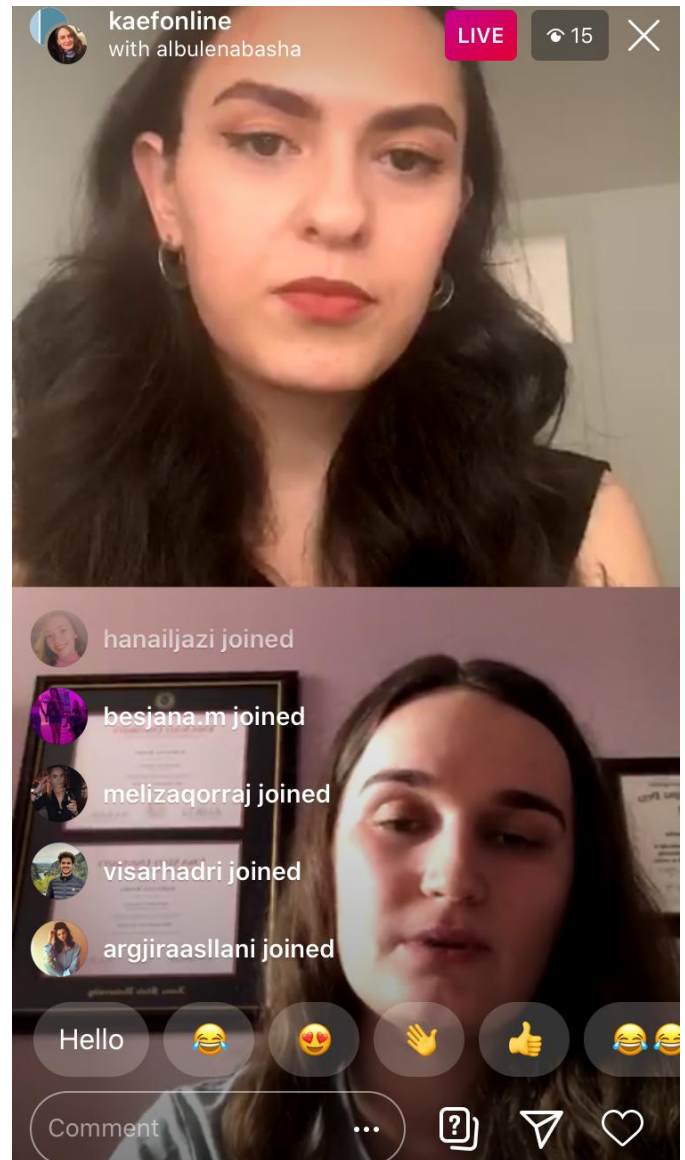
# PROGRAM RECRUITMENT CYCLE 2021

## Another Successful Recruitment for KAEF

Despite the many challenges surrounding the global pandemic, KAEF managed to conduct another successful round of recruitment. This year our recruitment activities shifted completely from traditional in-person sessions to online Zoom talks and Instagram Live sessions.

Together with our newly returned fellows and graduating alumni, we held 5 Instagram Admission Talks with Q&A sessions, where interested applicants had the opportunity to get first-hand information on the application process.

Additionally, we held three virtual zoom sessions, with one dedicated specifically to the students of the Electrical Engineering department at the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science, University of Prishtina.



## NEXT STEPS FOR THE 2021 KAEF COHORT

The 2021 application for the KAEF Graduate Fellowship Program closed on July 13, 2020. This year we received more than 120 applications. The U.S. Selection Committee has reviewed the applications and the tier 1 candidates will move forward to the next rounds of the recruitment process soon.

- TOEFL exams for the tier 1 candidates.
- Interview with the U.S. Selection Committee.
- Tier 2 semi-finalists identified.
- GRE or GMAT exams for the tier 2 semi-finalists.
- KAEF Finalists identified.

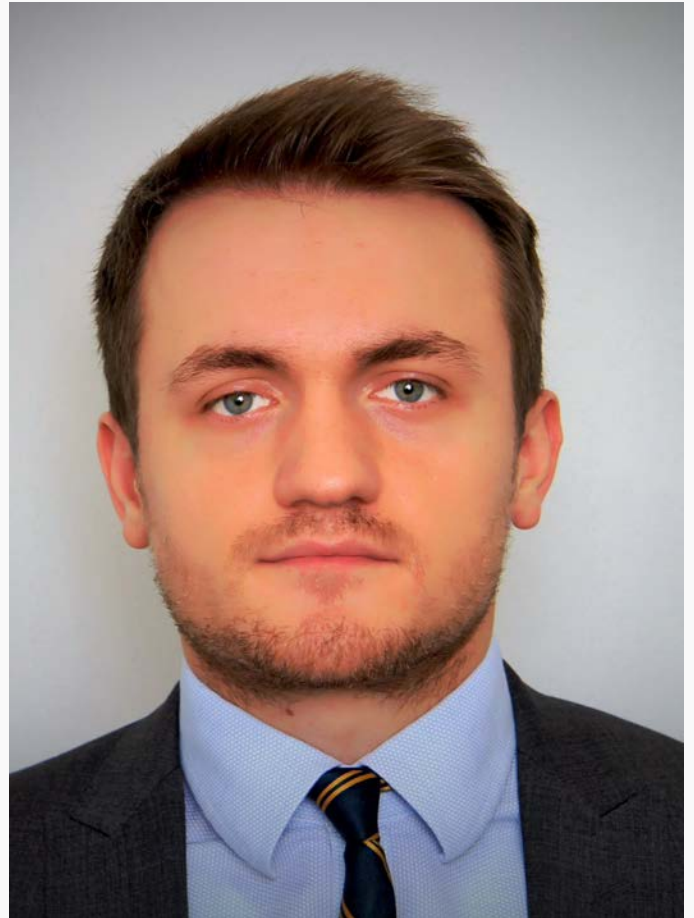
---

## PROGRAM ALUMNI - LATEST PUBLICATIONS

---

### **"Paving the way for (more) factoring in Kosovo" by alumnus Milot Ahma (Duke University '15)**

Milot Ahma has recently published an article that features a discussion with Albulena Xhelili-Berisha, Director of the Department for Licensing and Standardisation at the Central Bank of Kosovo (CBK), on the potential of factoring in boosting access to finance and financial inclusion in Kosovo. CBK has recently adopted a new regulation on factoring, where Ahma served as part of the EBRD Legal Transition Team, assisting the CBK with developing a factoring regulation and raising awareness about this financial product among the SME Sector and financial institutions. Click [here](#) to read the article.



### **"City of dreams no more: The impact of COVID-19 on urban workers in India" by alumna Fjolla Kondirolli (Cornell University '17)**

An article by Fjolla Kondirolli and coauthors was published as part of the London School of Economics series on COVID-19 impacts. The study looks at the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on urban workers in India. India had one of the world's strictest lockdowns to slow down the spread of coronavirus. The study finds that as in many countries, unemployment increased dramatically. But unlike in many developed and some developing economies, half of urban workers in India went without work or pay and received no financial assistance to tide over the crisis. Click [here](#) to read the article.





---

## PROGRAM FELLOWS - AWARDS

---

### KAEF Fellow Erëza Gjikołli wins Grace Hopper Scholarship

Erëza Gjikołli (Bentley University '21) is the recipient of the prestigious Grace Hopper scholarship, enabling her to attend the largest gathering of women in computing, the Grace Hopper Celebration.

The Grace Hopper Celebration is a series of conferences that brings together women with research and career interests in computing. It is also the world's largest gathering of women technologists. This year the conference will be held virtually, from September 26th to October 3rd, with attendees coming from 90+ countries.



*"I am honored to be a recipient of the prestigious Grace Hopper Celebration Scholarship to attend the vGHC, a groundbreaking, high-tech virtual celebration, which has always been a unique place for women to forge communities. It is a great opportunity for me to discover more about my field, network with new people, and think about how I can further my career. I am excited to learn, network, and be inspired as we will be working alongside renowned world leaders to achieve intersectional gender and pay parity in tech. Most importantly, I'm looking forward to sharing my experience with tech girls and women in Kosovo."*



---

## PROGRAM FELLOWS - DEVELOPING CAREER PATHS

---



**ANYLA REXHEPI**

MBA, Marketing, Temple University '21

"August 15th marked the end of my journey as a Marketing Intern at **Solenis** in Wilmington, Delaware. It has always been important to me to work for purpose-driven companies; and I can confidently say that Solenis is a case in point. Throughout my time there, I gained a new sense of professionalism and a clearer view of what it meant to be in the professional world.

I am grateful to Solenis for trusting me with presenting my project to the CEO and the Executive Leadership Team, and most importantly for running the program despite these emotional and trial times. Now, I am excited to embark on my final year of the MBA program."



**EGZON OSMANI**

MSc, Financial Analytics, Bentley University '21

"During this summer, I have been involved with an internship in Financial Reporting at **Tufts Health Plan**, a leading healthcare company in New England. My main role has been to prepare and update the financial reporting schedules in order to support the preparation of the monthly Pre-Close and Final-Close Decks. Besides engaging in the financial reporting models, I have also assisted in the EY audit interim testing for the whole company, by managing the walk-through meeting sessions as well as audit requirements list.

I am amazed by the company's culture at Tufts Health Plan; such a highly collaborative firm, irrespective of the team!"



# LEADING KOSOVO TO A BETTER TOMORROW

The Kosovo American Education Fund is proud to announce that alumnus Selim Selimi and Besian Mustafa have assumed two leadership positions in the new Government of Kosovo. Mr. Selimi will be serving as the new Minister of Justice, and Mr. Mustafa will continue his role as the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development.



**BESIAN MUSTAFA**

City University of New York '12

Minister Mustafa has been leading the implementation of two programs that aim at supporting the competitiveness of the agricultural sector, increasing food security and agricultural productivity, by providing financial support to farmers through grants and subsidies.

Additionally, the Ministry has taken a number of measures, to facilitate an easier application process for farmers, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



**SELIM SELIMI**

Duke University '10

As the Minister of Justice, Selimi has worked with the civil society and the private sector in Kosovo to create an MOU to employ victims of domestic violence and sexual violence during the war.

Additionally, he has mentioned that among his priorities during this mandate is the creation of the Commercial Court, as well as increasing accountability in the public institutions.

---

# BESA LUCI ON DARING JOURNALISM IN KOSOVO

---

**Editor's note** – Besa Luci has kept busy since she was a KAEF fellow at the University of Missouri. After graduating with a master's degree in Journalism and Magazine Writing, Luci co-founded Kosovo 2.0, an independent media organization, that sheds light on issues of injustice, discrimination, human rights, and current affairs in the country and the world. Initially launched as Kosovo's first blogging platform, K2.0 grew to become an established media outlet with an ever-growing audience. K2.0 is also the only medium in the country that publishes in three languages – Albanian, English, and Serbian- a testament of their dedication to deepening the understanding of issues and establishing cross-cultural links between the country and the region.

Luci belongs to one of the earliest generations of KAEF fellows. She credits her time at the university and the courses that she took in magazine production as the catalyst for founding K2.0. While in Mizzou, Luci was also able to build her portfolio by working in her university's daily newspaper, the Columbia Missourian, as well as attend prestigious editorial internships.

This year, K2.0 is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Together with Luci, we discussed her decennial work as the editor in chief of K2.0, the impact and their biggest achievements in Kosovar journalism, and what the future holds for the magazine.





**This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Kosovo 2.0. Just two years before you co-founded Kosovo 2.0, you had emerged as a fresh graduate of journalism and magazine writing from University of Missouri, one of the best journalism schools in the U.S. Can you describe us what motivated you to start this media organization?**

For me, Missouri played a huge role in how I went on to develop and grow as a journalist. I already had a journalism background because I had a bachelor's degree in journalism from the American University in Bulgaria, and then immediately upon graduation, I got a scholarship from KAEF to study at the University of Missouri. [Therefore,] I was already aware of the fact that it had an amazing journalism program, one of the best in the U.S.

When I had gone, initially, I had this idea to become more of a newspaper, daily reporter. That is how I saw myself getting engaged in journalism. But when I went to Missouri, I ended up taking classes in magazine writing and a whole new world of journalism opened up for me. It was a direct influence from the faculty and the professors who were teaching magazine writing. I immediately saw how magazine writing offers so many opportunities to talk about what shapes and what makes a society, and by really putting the focus on the lived experiences, the various kinds of experiences of people who make up the society.

So, I had already started thinking of making my own magazine while I was in Missouri because I already took classes in magazine writing, magazine editing, and magazine production. I really got engrained in all the production processes of putting together a magazine. When I graduated and came back to Kosovo, I came back with this idea, this preliminary sketch of starting a magazine. I am extremely grateful and happy to have had this opportunity, to have attended Mizzou, and to have had those amazing professors and to learn so much from them.



**In the latest issue of the magazine, on your Letter from the Editor, you mention some of the political and social backgrounds that shaped the founding of Kosovo 2.0. Can you talk about the role this played on starting this media outlet?**

When I moved back, I just noticed there was a gap in the media environment and in the media landscape. What I thought was lacking was these in-depth human-driven stories. There was a lack of diversity of voices being heard, read, or seen within the media. At that time, I was younger, and I thought that the voice of the youth and the different perspectives challenging so-called established truths and narratives were completely absent. Everything was taken for granted on the way of how things were. I thought that there was so much debate and discussion that needed to be brought, not just within Kosovo itself, but also by making links between people here, in the region and the world. Also, having those links and connections based on issues and commonalities, what we can share and learn from one another, as well as how we can broaden the way we understand the world around us.

These were some of the things we were discussing at the beginning of Kosovo 2.0. How can we create this platform where people have the space to talk, to write, to challenge, to debate?

*If you have one media outlet, one editor, one journalist working in something substantial, it contributes to the overall profession of journalism.*



We did this by launching the blogging platform, but also by creating a space for a different kind of journalism - journalism that goes in-depth, journalism that listens to people, turns statistics into relatable human experiences, talks about different forms of injustice, journalism that seeks accountability. These were two things we were interested in doing, all the while broadening the debate and our understanding of issues and processes.

This was the idea behind it. Also, this is why we had it written from the beginning in three languages, Albanian, English, and Serbian, because we wanted to have it in all these languages available to be able to establish more links, to be more read, and have larger participation.

**Your article and stories are brave, they cover a diverse array of topics, and most importantly, they portray people who are not frequently represented on our news channels. How do you think this form of writing changed the journalism in Kosovo?**

There was feature writing, of course, even before Kosovo 2.0. I think we contributed towards the blogging format in the beginning when we started. K2.0 was the first blogging platform.

In the meantime, there have been smaller media projects that have been established, there is more and more interest in the younger generation of journalists to do human-driven stories about discrimination, different forms of inequality and injustice, in-depth investigations that are narrative driven. I feel K2.0 contributed by showing the power of that format. The power of this kind of narrative journalism format is that it helps people understand what discrimination means, what injustice means, why human rights are important. It really helps to make it relatable to people who might not have had that experience. So, I feel like we contributed to expanding the understandings and expectations from journalism as well.

If you have one media outlet, one editor, one journalist working in something substantial, it contributes to the overall profession of journalism. It is difficult to measure and see it directly, but it contributes. Especially today, I see the young generation of journalists and there is so much drive, potential, curiosity, and social responsibility. It is a different kind of generation of journalists and I want to believe that we somehow contributed to that, from our journalism and programs.



*Among their online and print magazine, K2.0 offers several mentorship programs and fellowships for young journalists.*

*It still amazes and mesmerizes me how much we are read by our diaspora and what kind of meaning and impact we have for them...From their comments, we understand how impactful [K2.0] it is, how it opened up a completely different view and understanding of Kosovo, and how they end up relating more with the country.*



**You mention the human-driven stories that K2.0 focuses on, and the feedback that you have received from different people in Kosovo. Do you think that this has been your biggest achievement so far? When it comes to journalism in Kosovo, what do you believe has been the biggest achievement of Kosovo 2.0?**

I do not know what I would call the biggest achievement, it is difficult to talk about the 'biggest' achievement. The people I mentioned are from Kosovo but also, a lot of them come from the diaspora. It still amazes and mesmerizes me how much we are read by our diaspora and what kind of meaning and impact we have for them. As we are now in our 10th year, we see that we are constantly reaching out to new members of our diaspora. As young people become teens or enter adulthood, we are constantly gaining new readers from our diaspora. From their comments, we understand how impactful [K2.0] it is, how it opened up a completely different view and understanding of Kosovo, and how they end up relating more with the country.

In terms of the biggest achievement, there have been different kinds of issues. With journalism sometimes you can have a direct impact on a policy change, sometimes you can have an impact on a larger societal issue.

For example, our Sex issue that also had a full section of LGBTQ rights, was a big changer in Kosovo because it broke the culture of silence when it comes to speaking for LGBTQ rights in Kosovo. It is very unfortunate what happened, and it is frustrating the attack we faced when we launched this issue, but in the long run the positive impact was so big because it broke the culture of silence. So much has changed for good. This was a big achievement.

Another article with big impact was when we wrote about segregation that was happening in the public transportation in Fushe Kosove or Obilic, where Roma citizens were made to sit at the end of the bus. It caused a reaction even from the institutions.

I always have trouble naming 'one' thing, I guess it is the same with achievements. Learning and growing together, having so many different young journalists going through K2.0, whether be staff or from our programs, is something to be happy about. I also see that as an achievement.

**This is a shortened version of the interview with Mrs.Luci. For full article please click [here](#).**



---

## ALUMNI BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: SONNECTO BY GRANIT LIMANI

---

### Driving Economic Development through Entrepreneurship

Granit Limani graduated with an MBA in International Business from St. John's University, New York, in 2016. Upon his return to Kosovo he continued to grow his previous business, Entermedia, and open other ventures, expanded his client base internationally, increased his number of employees and diversified in more segments and businesses. He is currently the Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Sonnecto, a business process outsourcing company.



**Sonnecto** is a tech-driven company specialized in customer support, dedicated teams and software solutions. Based in Prishtina, they transform companies in the US and Europe through comprehensive assistance, client engagement, software solutions, sales, analytics, back-office processing and frontline support.

Founded in 2018, it now employs over 70 young specialists in Kosovo and has been growing exponentially over the last two years, building an impressive list of clients and partners worldwide.



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

To support our program, visit:  
[www.mygiving.net/donate/KAEF](http://www.mygiving.net/donate/KAEF)  
or check our latest initiative on our  
[LinkedIn page](#).

CONTACT:

[ks@americancouncils.org](mailto:ks@americancouncils.org) | +383 38 226 255

Rexhep Luci Street 30, Nr. 8/3-1

10000 Pristina, Kosovo

