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Institucioni i Avokatit të Popullit • Institucija Ombudsmana • Ombudsperson Institution

STRATEGY OF THE OMBUDSPERSON'S INSTITUTION

2026-2027

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE 2026-2027 STRATEGY

The Ombudsperson Institution (OI) is an independent constitutional institution of the Republic of Kosovo mandated to protect, oversee and promote fundamental human rights and freedoms. Fulfilling this mandate requires a planned approach that links (i) the handling of individual cases; (ii) addressing systemic human rights issues, (iii) overseeing public institutions with regard to respect for human rights, and (iv) strengthening citizens' knowledge of their rights.

The OI has a unique organisational structure, consisting of the Ombudsperson, five (5) Deputy Ombudspersons, the Secretary General and the respective departments, which exercise their functions and responsibilities in accordance with the constitutional and legal mandate of the institution.

In this regard, the OI Strategy for the period 2026–2027 presents the guiding framework for action for the next two years, defining strategic priorities and objectives, which are set out in the respective matrix through actions, responsible units, deadlines, expected results and measurable indicators. The narrative document explains the interconnection between the OI's mandate, strategic priorities and planned actions, presenting the strategy not merely as a list of activities, but as an integrated development programme for the two-year period.

At the same time, the strategy aims to ensure the continuity, stability and sustainable functioning of the OI, while maintaining flexibility to adapt priorities in line with institutional developments and the vision of the institution's leadership.

The 2026–2027 Strategy is also developed in the context of ongoing institutional, social and technological developments that affect the way human rights are exercised and protected. In addition to handling individual complaints, the OI aims to strengthen its preventive approach, identify systemic issues and enhance the impact of its recommendations on improving policies, legislation and administrative practices. In this regard, the strategy aims to consolidate an integrated model of institutional action in which the protection, oversight and promotion of human rights complement one another.

Particular attention is paid to three main areas: (I) increasing the effectiveness of human rights protection through the handling of complaints, investigations and recommendations; (II) strengthening promotion, education and cooperation with the public; and (III) ensuring the organisational, financial and technological capacities needed to fulfil the mandate. These issues are interconnected: investigations reveal the reasons for barriers to the exercise of human rights, promotion facilitates citizens' access to protection mechanisms, while other planning activities ensure the quality and continuity of the work.

When reading the matrix, it is important to distinguish between planned activities and results achieved. This document describes the commitments for the 2026–2027 period and the intended impact, without presenting them as completed achievements.

Constitutional and legal mandate of the OI

The mandate of the Ombudsperson is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and Law No. 05/L-019 on the Ombudsperson. At the core of these constitutional and legal provisions is the oversight of respect for the rights and freedoms of individuals by public authorities. Impartiality, independence, the supremacy of human rights, confidentiality and professionalism are the main principles governing the activities under the OI's mandate, and they guide every step of the OI's work and activities.

The OI is competent, among other things, to receive complaints, examine their admissibility, conduct investigations and issue recommendations to the responsible authorities. The Ombudsperson may also initiate investigations *ex officio* when matters of public interest or the circumstances of a case require intervention even in the absence of an individual complaint. Its powers include drafting reports and opinions, intervening in the capacity of *amicus curiae* in relevant circumstances, proposing legislative amendments and cooperating with domestic and international human rights mechanisms.

The role of the institution is not limited to responding to an alleged violation. Through oversight and follow-up on the implementation of recommendations, the OI aims to prevent similar violations from recurring. For this reason, the handling of a complaint should also be viewed as a source of information for broader improvements to public authorities, legislation and the provision of public services.

The OI's mandate also includes specialised functions incorporated into the matrix, including oversight of protection against discrimination, as the OI also acts as an equality body and has powers defined under Law No. 05/L-021 on Protection from Discrimination, children's rights under Law No. 06/L-084 on Child Protection, and the activities of the National Preventive Mechanism against Torture (NPM), pursuant to the Law on the Ombudsperson.

Strategic continuity: the 2021–2025 period and the 2024 review

The previous OI Strategy covered the period 2021–2025 and was adopted on 18 March 2021. It was initially accompanied by the 2021–2023 Implementation Plan. The overall aim was to increase the institution's impact on the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms, the prevention of violations by public institutions, and human rights education. Importance was also attached to *ex officio* investigations, particularly into systemic issues, as well as the effective examination of individual cases.

The 2021–2025 Strategy had four objectives: (1) the protection and oversight of rights through increased institutional impact; (2) the promotion of rights and the role of the OI; (3) linking the

2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals with human rights; and (4) the development of institutional capacities and human resources. This structure combined protection and promotion work with a development dimension and improvements to internal functioning.

During 2024, the strategy was reviewed and the 2024–2025 Action Plan was prepared. The review created an opportunity to reassess activities and deadlines against the institution’s needs and practices, making planning more responsive to concrete developments.

Periodic reporting and analysis of results by the relevant working group responsible for monitoring the aforementioned strategy served as institutional mechanisms for tracking progress.

Approach and structure of the 2026–2027 Strategy

The 2026–2027 Action Plan Matrix is organised around three strategic objectives. **(I)** The first focuses on the protection and oversight of fundamental human rights and freedoms; **(II)** the second on public promotion and awareness-raising; while **(III)** the third focuses on institutional capacity development, budget administration and support services. Focusing on these three areas establishes a more direct link between the OI’s core mandate and the resources required for its implementation.

Compared with the 2021–2025 planning framework, the 2030 Agenda dimension does not appear as a separate strategic objective in the new matrix. This should not automatically be interpreted as abandoning the link between sustainable development and human rights. On the contrary, the OI considers it important to link its human rights protection mandate with the specific objectives of the Agenda, which is currently also done through the database and helps the institution identify findings, recommendations and decisions that contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this regard, this Strategy is based on specific objectives that reflect the stages of institutional action: receiving and investigating complaints; addressing findings and recommendations; overseeing respect for rights; intensifying communication with the public; promoting rights; strengthening cooperation; financial planning and control; administrative support; improving information technology; and the professional development of OI staff.

An important characteristic is the distribution of actions and indicators among different departments and units. Some activities have a directly responsible department, while others require contributions from other structures. This approach reflects the fact that the protection and promotion of rights are not the responsibility of a single department, but shared functions of the institution, while also respecting the division of responsibilities among the respective departments.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE I: PROTECTION AND OVERSIGHT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The first objective constitutes the core of the OI's activities. It aims to ensure that citizens have effective access to complaint mechanisms and that allegations of human rights violations are handled professionally, impartially and within reasonable time limits. Objective 1.1 includes the receipt of complaints, preliminary analysis, assessment of admissibility, their review and investigation, as well as the proposal and initiation of ex officio cases.

Establishing indicators for the number of complaints received, opened for investigation, deemed inadmissible, completed and discontinued allows the analysis of the workload and the progress of cases. However, in addition to the number, the quality of reasoning, the duration of the review process, the nature of the violations identified and the concrete improvements achieved for citizens are also important. Recording the reasons for inadmissibility may also help in preparing guidance for publication for public use.

The plan provides for legal assistance and counselling for victims of discrimination, the identification of strategic cases for intervention and the preparation of professional positions, including *amicus curiae*. These measures strengthen the institution's capacity to address not only the individual consequences, but also the legal and administrative practices that give rise to violations of rights.

Objective 1.2 focuses on addressing findings and recommendations. Monitoring implementation, written communication, meetings with central and local authorities, and proposals for legislative amendments establish the link between identifying a problem and the institutional response to it. Preparing a special report on protection against discrimination serves as an instrument for analysing structural issues and promoting the necessary reforms in the field of discrimination, and is also a legal requirement under the Law on Protection from Discrimination.

Objective 1.3 focuses on overseeing compliance with human rights. This includes, among other things, the activities of the NMPT, which place prevention at the centre of action through visits to places of deprivation of liberty and the preparation of relevant reports. It also includes monitoring compliance with obligations concerning protection against discrimination and identifying legal gaps, helping ensure that the OI's recommendations are based on evidence and the continuous assessment of practice.

The effectiveness of the Ombudsperson's work is not measured solely by the number of complaints processed or reports published. A decisive dimension is the extent to which public institutions take the findings into account, implement recommendations and change the practices that have caused violations. For this reason, systematic follow-up of recommendations in the new matrix should be treated as an ongoing process, with clearly divided responsibilities and documented communication.

The matrix includes recording implemented, pending and unimplemented recommendations, as well as narrative reports on progress. This allows the identification of relationships with institutions and the addressing of issues where progress is slower.

Meetings with authorities, official communications and cooperation with the Office of the Prime Minister, ministries, agencies and municipalities serve as practical mechanisms for identifying obstacles, discussing solutions, determining corrective steps and following up on deadlines.

Reporting to the Assembly and cooperation with parliamentary committees give the OI's results the necessary dimension of public accountability. Reports should reflect not only activities and outputs, but also structural challenges, unresolved issues and the need for responses from other institutions.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE II: PROMOTION AND AWARENESS-RAISING OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

The promotion of human rights is a substantive function of the OI. Citizens can exercise their rights more effectively when they know their rights, understand complaint procedures and know which mechanism to approach. At the same time, public authorities can prevent violations if their officials are familiar with the relevant standards and the legal obligations they must respect.

Objective 2.1 provides for intensifying communication with the public, mainly through campaigns on the OI's mandate, particularly at the municipal level; roundtables with the legal departments of public institutions; thematic discussions related to the Ombudsperson's positions; campaigns on equality and non-discrimination; and cooperation with the media and civil society. One specific planned activity aims to address an important topic: ethical reporting, disinformation, privacy, dignity and the protection of personal data.

Objective 2.2 transforms promotion into a broader and more inclusive educational programme.

The promotion of human rights is an essential dimension of the OI's mandate and should not be limited solely to informing the public about the existence and powers of the institution. Promotion aims to build a culture of respect for human rights, empower citizens to identify and report violations, and raise public authorities' awareness of their obligations. For this reason, promotional activities will be carried out in cooperation among the OI's departments, drawing on findings from the handling of complaints, investigations, reports and recommendations issued by the institution. This approach ensures that promotional activities are based on real issues and tailored to the needs of target groups.

The activities planned for 2026 and 2027 address, among other things, children's rights, complaint procedures, the rights of persons with disabilities, the rights of non-majority communities,

workplace rights with a focus on women, and the prevention of gender-based violence. Commemorating international days aims to provide information, promote awareness and open debate on specific issues involving non-compliance with human rights standards, as well as to raise citizens' awareness of these issues and the mechanisms for addressing them.

The Action Plan also includes substantial updates to and maintenance of the “*Know Your Rights*” platform, as well as the preparation of a guide on the impact of digitalisation and artificial intelligence on children's rights. These actions demonstrate the need to adapt communication to the digital environment while maintaining legal accuracy, clear language and user accessibility.

Successful promotion requires advance planning of materials, distribution channels, audiences and evaluation methods. Beyond the number of events, the geographical reach and impact of the OI's promotional activities, the inclusion of groups facing barriers, the level of participation and the conclusions drawn from these meetings will be assessed. In this way, promotion becomes an instrument of prevention and empowerment, rather than merely an indicator of institutional visibility.

Objective 2.3 aims to strengthen cooperation with domestic and international partners. The matrix provides for regular meetings of the Forum for Dialogue, with rotating participation by OI departments; cooperation with civil society organisations and public institutions; training modules on protection against discrimination; exchanges with international actors; reporting and communication with the Assembly; and meetings in the regions to promote the OI's mandate and follow up on the implementation of its recommendations.

The Forum for Dialogue serves as a platform for discussing current challenges and formulating joint positions or conclusions. The rotating involvement of OI units creates opportunities for issues raised by partners to be addressed from different professional perspectives and for the knowledge gained to be shared throughout the institution.

One of the most important features of the new plan is that many activities do not fall under the responsibility of a single unit. For example, the analysis of complaints can support an information campaign; findings on discrimination can inform the development of training modules; thematic reports can be turned into practical materials; and regional meetings can contribute simultaneously to promotion and the follow-up of recommendations. This requires coordination among departments, including the Department for Cooperation and Promotion, the Cabinet and support services.

International cooperation should remain focused on tangible benefits: the exchange of practices, capacity-building, participation in professional networks and the use of international standards to improve day-to-day work. Participation in an event or visit adds value when accompanied by a concise report and the identification of actions that can be implemented within the OI.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE III: RESOURCES, SUPPORT SERVICES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The development of institutional capacities is a necessary condition for achieving the first two objectives. The matrix places emphasis on budget planning, expenditure management, internal control, auditing, procurement, support services, information technology and professional development. These areas may not always be visible to the public, but they directly affect the quality, speed and reliability of the services provided by the OI.

Objective 3.1 includes the preparation of the annual budget and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, the analysis of budget ceilings and the identification of opportunities for projects supported by external funding. Financial planning should be linked to the actual cost of the commitments set out in the matrix and to prioritising activities that have the greatest impact on fulfilling the mandate.

Objectives 3.2 and 3.3 address expenditure execution, financial reporting, periodic reconciliations, self-assessment of internal control and addressing audit recommendations. Transparent and accountable management of public finances helps preserve functional independence and ensure confidence that resources are used proportionately to institutional needs.

Objective 3.4 covers administrative services, procurement and logistical support. Procurement and general services must be planned in a timely manner to prevent potential problems in carrying out various activities, visits, training sessions and fieldwork.

Objective 3.5 includes the maintenance and upgrading of information technology systems, the procurement of equipment and licences, the modernisation of existing infrastructure and improvements to data security. This is particularly important given the sensitive nature of the complaints and information handled by the OI. Objective 3.6 provides for training in strategic planning, risk management, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and other specific areas, including participation in international training.

Implementation, monitoring, risks and conclusions

The Action Plan should serve as the main instrument for the day-to-day management of the 2026–2027 Strategy. Each activity is linked to the relevant goal and objective, has a clear deadline, identifies the lead responsibility and specifies the contributions of each department. The six-monthly and quarterly indicators set out in the matrix enable progress to be monitored.

Implementation of the Strategy will be monitored by a **Working Group**, as a *coordinating structure for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Strategy*. This **Working Group** shall be established by a decision of the Ombudsperson.

To ensure consistent and comparable monitoring, each responsible department and unit shall contribute to the collection and periodic reporting of data on the activities specified in the Action

Plan. The Working Group shall coordinate the monitoring process, analyse progress against the established indicators and deadlines, and identify obstacles requiring institutional intervention. Monitoring results shall serve not only to document the completion of activities, but also to guide decision-making, improve coordination and adjust implementation measures as necessary.

As in previous practice, a six-monthly report shall be prepared to monitor progress in implementing the Plan. The report should provide an overview of the level of completion of the planned activities and progress towards the intended targets. The six-monthly report shall focus on meeting activity deadlines, as set out in the Action Plan, the reasons for delays, risks associated with implementing the actions and the next steps.

The Action Plan also identifies risks. Implementation risks may include limited human and budgetary resources, the caseload, delays in responses from authorities, failure to implement recommendations, limited access to vulnerable groups, and technological or information security challenges.

Since this Strategy covers only a two-year planning period, a mid-term review of progress during 2027 may help adjust activities without changing the fundamental objectives.

In conclusion, the 2026–2027 Strategy aims to consolidate the role of the OI as an independent, accessible and impactful mechanism for the protection of human rights. Successful implementation will depend on coordination among departments, monitoring, the responsible use of resources and, above all, the ability to translate findings and recommendations into concrete improvements in citizens' lives.

SEPARATE ANNEX

2026–2027 Action Plan Matrix, approved on 26 october