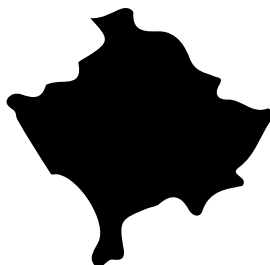

Social Rights Monitor 2025 - Country Report - Kosovo



Contents

1. About SOLIDAR
2. What is the Social Rights Monitor (SRM)?
3. What is the process?
4. How do we use it?
5. Social Rights Monitor Overview
6. Equal Opportunities and Access to the Labour Market
7. Fair Working Conditions
8. Social Inclusion and Protection
9. Civic Space
10. Just Transition

About SOLIDAR

SOLIDAR is a European network of progressive Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working to advance social justice through a just transition in Europe and worldwide. We represent over 50 member organisations based in 26 countries (19 of which are EU countries), among which national CSOs in Europe, as well as some non-EU and EU-wide organisations, working in one or more of our fields of activity.

The network is brought together by its shared values of solidarity, equality and participation.

SOLIDAR voices the concerns of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions by carrying out advocacy actions, project management and coordination, policy monitoring and awareness-raising across its different policy areas.

What is the Social Rights Monitor (SRM)?

The Social Rights Monitor assesses the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) at national level from a civil society perspective. The EPSR – also known as the Social Pillar – is a set of 20 principles that guide the action of the European Union in the realm of social affairs and policies. In other words, it is intended to be a compass guiding the EU towards a more social Europe. For too many people, however, the implementation of these principles at national and EU level is not yet a reality.

Thanks to the contribution of our members and their networks on the ground (the National Strategy Groups), SOLIDAR monitors the extent to which social rights are respected, upheld and promoted for all people living in the EU. The Social Rights Monitor also investigates the health of civic space and social and civil dialogue in the EU, as well as the extent to which a just transition is being pursued. Therefore, the thematic areas covered by the Monitor are the following: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market; Fair working conditions; Social inclusion and protection; a Just transition; and Civic space. The first three correspond to the three chapters of the EPSR, while the last two have been added to give a fuller picture of social justice in Europe.

Thanks to first-hand data gathered by national civil society organisations, the Social Rights Monitor constitutes a direct channel of policy recommendations between the national level and EU policymakers. It thus amplifies the voices and needs of the most marginalised groups. The Monitor dedicates a section to “advocacy messages” which result from the national-level analyses in each thematic area and are addressed to EU policymakers.

Countries are assigned a score for each thematic area out of a maximum of 100 points. This makes immediately visible how each country is performing in each area and enables comparison with other countries. The numerical scores originate from the National Strategy Groups’ (NSGs) assessments of national developments related to social rights, civic space and just transition. Negative developments in an area result in lower scores. NSGs rate these developments for each country by replying to Linkert-scale questions. This means that the score of a country’s thematic area is given by adding up all the rates given to the questions concerning that thematic area and expressing the score out of 100. The overall score of a country is the average of the thematic areas scores. Further details on the questionnaire and data gathering are provided in the section “About: What is the process?”

Since the SRM score reflects the NSG’s assessment of changes—either improvements or deteriorations—in each of the five areas over the past 12 months, it does not represent the overall status of these dimensions in absolute terms. Instead, it highlights recent trends. For example, a country with a historically strong welfare state might receive a low score if recent reforms have significantly weakened social rights or pose a risk of doing so. This does not imply that the overall situation is poor, but rather that recent developments are cause for concern and may undermine social standards over time.

Therefore, the SRM should not be used to compare the overall situation of social rights across countries—official statistics are more appropriate for that purpose. Instead, it serves as a tool to track short-term national trends and to understand the perspectives of civil society organizations (CSOs) on these developments.

What is the process?

The Social Rights Monitor is a tool that amplifies the voice of progressive civil society at national level. Its content is based on the inputs provided by the National Strategy Groups (NSGs) set up by SOLIDAR’s members and partners, which are active in the countries analysed. They consist of NGOs, associations, movements, trade unions, academia and thinktanks, ensuring that the perspective of civil society is mirrored in the Social Rights Monitor’s analysis. The Monitor reflects the experiences of these organisations, which are active on the ground, and the experiences are complemented by scientific data gathered through desk research.

The data elaborated in the Social Rights Monitor are gathered by SOLIDAR’s secretariat through a questionnaire distributed to the National Strategy Group Leaders (our national members) and completed with information produced by each group. From 2023, this questionnaire has been carried out online.

Based on the picture that emerges from the Monitor, SOLIDAR and the NSGs together devise policy recommendations for EU policymakers. These aim to make social rights, a healthy planet and an enabling, free, protected civic space a reality for all in Europe. The key recommendations stemming from the analysis are used as a basis for SOLIDAR's social affairs advocacy work.

The SRM is published every year, around the end of November/beginning of December and its findings cover the period going from June of the previous year to May of the year of the publication. This timeline is due to the fact that the NSGs submit their questionnaire by the end of May of the publication year.

How do we use it?

SOLIDAR's main role as a European-level civil society network is as a bridge between EU institutions and their policies on the one hand and our progressive members working at the national level on the other. The Social Rights Monitor is a valuable tool to gather information from the ground and bring it to policymakers' attention. This ensures that the voices of the most neglected social groups are duly taken into account. For example, the SRM complements the European Semester, by providing a more-complete assessment of Member State policies. Regrettably, the Semester is still too focused on countries' economic and financial performances and does not provide sufficient guidance on upward social convergence in the European Union.

SOLIDAR disseminates the findings of the Social Rights Monitor in various ways, including through the Social Europe Conference, an annual event at which it is presented, and which also explores a topic of priority for social Europe. More generally, the Monitor is one of the main ways through which the SOLIDAR network presents its positions on social affairs, so its findings are mainstreamed throughout our advocacy work.

Social Rights Monitor Overview

SCORE: 64

There are several persistent social challenges in Kosovo, notably in the area of employment, the NSG reported. Gender equality is low, and the women's employment rate is very low. One major factor is the lack of childcare facilities, and another is the absence of reform of laws such as the 2010 Labour Law, which has a severe negative impact on gender equality. Youth unemployment remains high, and job security in general is low. Occupational health and safety regulations are ineffective due to a lack of enforcement. Essential services and sustainable mobility are insufficiently available, and substantial parts of the population cannot access either. The non-inclusion of national minorities is also a problem, and it affects areas including gender equality, social dialogue and employment conditions. The state of civic space in Kosovo is good overall, the NSG reported, albeit with room for improvement.

The NSG for Kosovo was led by SOLIDAR's member [Internews Kosova](#).



Equal Opportunities and Access to the Labour Market

SCORE: 64

Gender Equality

Gender equality remains a large and persistent problem in Kosovo, the NSG reports. There is clear discrimination against women, with those from ethnic minorities such as Ashkali, Roma and Egyptians facing particular difficulties.^[1]

Gender inequality is especially visible in employment. More than 75% of the female working population (aged between 22 and 65) were not employed or seeking employment in 2023, according to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics.^[2] While the rate for men was also high, at 42.2%, the 33.6-percentage-point difference is very significant. This is also confirmed by the International Monetary Fund's Report on Gender Equality and the Labour Market in Kosovo. The IMF estimated a female labour force participation rate of less than 20% in 2022, significantly below the Western Balkans' regional average of 45%.^[3] Civil Society Organization research and statistics showed that women from marginalized communities and women with disabilities face discrimination in employment.^[4]

The NSG identifies several barriers to women's access to employment. Kosovan society still has a patriarchal mindset, which favours inheritance of sons in inheriting properties and that results in less than one fifth of properties in the country being owned by women.^[5] Key social issues need to be addressed, such as access to early childhood education and the gender wage gap, as data shows that women are paid less than men.^[6] The lack of public childcare facilities is another substantial barrier. Kosovo only has 62 public kindergartens, and nine municipalities have none, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation reports.^[7] Private kindergartens exist, but monthly prices range from €80 to €250 per month.^[8] Given that the average gross monthly wage in 2024 was €639, and the net wage €552, many families in Kosovo cannot access these facilities.^[9]

Problems in the implementation of the 2010 Labour Law^[10] and delays in its reform prevent real and substantial improvements, even though the national government acknowledges the urgent need to reform it.^[11] The law's current form needs to implement the provisions of at least 15 European Directives before meeting EU standards. The law is also criticized for its approach to parental leave, as it makes employers primarily responsible for bearing the financial burden, disincentivizing them from hiring women. In addition, paternal leave is limited to two days, a clear disincentive for parents to share childcare responsibilities. Despite the clear need to reform the law, no concrete proposals for amendments were submitted in 2024. Moreover, at the start of 2024, the Kosovan government withdrew the Draft Labour Law – which would have reformed the 2010 Labour Law – from its legislative programme for the year^[12]. This raises many concerns, as the draft was essential for advancing gender equality and improving working conditions. In response, the Women's Economic Forum held a protest on 16 September 2024, demanding that the draft immediately be reincluded in the legislative programme. They also called for public consultations.^[13]

The Civil Code, which was highlighted in the European Commission's 2024 Report on Kosovo as an important tool for advancing gender equality, also awaits adoption.[14] The NSG, too, points out that the Civil Code could help eliminate gender discrimination embedded in other laws and contains provisions on gender and domestic violence. In addition, the code could create a legal basis for the protection and assistance of women affected by gender-based violence. And it could ensure equal opportunities and rights in all aspects of life, including inheritance, marriage, family relations and property ownership. However, the delay in the code's adoption has led to legal uncertainty and hindered the implementation of gender-equality principles and policy.

Women are underrepresented in high-level positions in both the political and justice systems. In the public sector, they are underrepresented in positions such as secretary general, department director and independent-agency head, the annual report of the Agency for Gender Equality shows.[15] It also shows that additional efforts are needed to ensure gender equality at all levels of government, as the representation of women is low in positions like deputy mayor and municipal-department director. Research from 2021 showed that women made up 15.52% of deputy mayors and 25% of municipal directors.[16] At the national level, one third of the Members of the Assembly of Kosovo were women in 2024, exceeding the legal quota of 30% but still far from parity.[17] In the justice system, 42.6% of prosecutors are women, but they occupy only 3% of leadership positions.[18]

Youth Unemployment

The youth (aged 15-24) unemployment rate was already substantial in 2023 at 16.2%, and it increased to 21.2% in 2024. Around 100,000 people aged 15 to 24 and 90,000 aged 25 to 29 are not in education, employment or training (NEET), according to the government's Labour Force Survey.[19] This translates into 33% of NEETs aged 15-24 in the country according to Eurofound 2024 data, the highest rate in the Western Balkan region. These numbers come against a background of high (27%) and extreme (7%) child poverty, as indicated by UNICEF.[20] Children and young people living in poverty are often forced to work and do not have equal opportunities for education. The 2010 Labour Law allows the employment of children and young people, albeit under specific conditions. Yet child abuse and the children in forced labour have become widespread through the practice of forced begging. This is highlighted in the US Department of State's 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report.[21] The police practice of qualifying forced begging as parental neglect or abuse – rather than trafficking – makes prosecution impossible, the report points out.

There are several barriers to youth employment in Kosovo. One is a mismatch between the education system and the needs of the labour market, which means many workers are not employed in professions that match their education.[22] This is especially the case for young people: 48% work in jobs that do not match their skills.[23] Vocational education is quite common among boys, at 53.8%. But only 41.6% of girls are in vocational education.[24]

Another obstacle is unequal access to employment opportunities. The need for family and political connections to access well-paying jobs exacerbates social injustice and leads many demotivated young Kosovans to consider emigrating.[25] The informal economy is highly present: The Labor Inspectorate found 3 829 workers without a contract.[26] Of these, 1 409 were women, signalling an overrepresentation of women among such workers, given women's low employment rate.[27] Sectors such as hospitality and services employ large numbers of young people without employment contracts.[28]

Due to the lack of regular employment, young people have trouble in accessing financing and credit, such as loans and mortgage-based lending. This is illustrated by the registration of half the properties in Kosovo under the names of deceased people.[29] Furthermore, volunteer work is not adequately regulated, so it is not recognized as work experience.[30] Young people therefore lack a clear incentive to engage in volunteer work, for example during periods of unemployment.

Good practice:

The government of Kosovo introduced several regulations in 2024 that oblige businesses to report workers to the Tax Administration Platform one day before their contractual starting date. These workers are thus entered in the tax system ahead of the start of the employment contract, reducing the potential for malpractice or abuse, including forcing workers to work for a period of time without a contract. Furthermore, the system has advanced through the use of a digital platform, which is updated in real time, allowing employees to easily check whether their employer has declared them as taxpayers to the Tax Administration. This practice has increased the number of registered employees and has helped prevent abuses.[31]

Inclusion of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and minorities

The NSG reports challenges related to the inclusion of migrant workers and national minorities. Whilst work immigration is limited due to Kosovo's economic and employment conditions, work visas have been issued for around 1 000 Bangladeshis. However, institutions have been unable to determine whether this migration led to active employment in Kosovo or whether the people concerned moved on to a third country. Independent labour rights monitors have reported poor working conditions for these migrant workers and serious violations of their labour rights.[32] Despite these warnings, the Labour Inspectorate does not mention violations of migrants' labour rights in its statistics and reports.

Serious and widespread problems affecting national minorities have been pointed out in a study by Internews Kosova, which leads the NSG for Kosovo. The study, which examined 50 public institutions, shows that Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are

systematically discriminated against in employment in public institutions.[33] They are excluded from leadership positions, and inclusion quotas are often not respected. In addition, they face discrimination in private sector employment, as they have fewer opportunities to participate in the labour market and are paid less, official government reports show.[34]



Fair Working Conditions

SCORE: 53

Job Security

Many employment contracts in Kosovo are short term. To improve working conditions and increase the inclusion of workers in formal employment, the government drafted the Employment Strategy 2024-2028. This mentions that 57.5% of workers were employed under temporary contracts in 2020, more than quadruple the EU average of 14%. [35] This is confirmed by the Labour Force Survey, published by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, which shows that 43.5% of workers have a permanent contract. The majority thus work under temporary contracts that last up to three years.[36] Under Kosovan labour law, employees are entitled to permanent contracts if they work for 10 years in a private enterprise, so the low proportion of permanent contracts points to high level of job insecurity in the private job market – especially when considering that public-sector jobs come with permanent employment contracts.

The Employment Strategy also seeks to establish a system to protect workers' income in times of unemployment. Kosovo currently has only one social scheme, a social assistance and minimum income programme for the poorest part of the population, which comes with very strict and specific criteria. No unemployment programme is currently available to Kosovan workers. Some forms of government support were available to businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but this seems to have been a one-time occurrence, as no similar support mechanisms were set up to deal with other crises. Moreover, the COVID support schemes were mainly aimed at incentivizing businesses to hire people and not at providing unemployment benefits. At the very least, according to the NSG, sector-specific initiatives are needed to address unemployment in sectors such as agriculture, which is prone to crop damage due to weather.[37]

The judicial protection of workers' rights remains a key issue for job security, the NSG points out. Employment-related proceedings can take more than five years to conclude, far longer than is reasonable – and too long to protect workers' rights. The Kosovan government acknowledged this in its concept document to draft a law to establish labour and administrative courts.[38] This document also acknowledged the need for specialized courts to make judicial proceedings more efficient and strengthen the enforcement of workers' rights. The adoption in December 2024 of a law to establish an administrative court seemed to be an important step in this direction.[39] The law envisions that the court will have several departments, including one for labour disputes and one for social schemes. However, the law is currently being challenged before the Constitutional Court due to alleged procedural mistakes during its adoption, and it has not yet entered into force.[40]

Occupation Health and Safety

Occupational health and safety (OSH) and healthcare in general continue to be problematic in Kosovo. Long-standing initiatives meant to improve both have not been implemented. Despite the initiation over 10 years ago of a plan to implement health insurance, no action has taken place. Similarly, the 2010 labour law has not been reformed despite an urgent need. The current government even removed its reform from a list of legislative proposals for 2024.[41]

Public healthcare does not meet all citizens' needs. The Ministry of Health, for example, sought to ensure the free provision of essential medicines to citizens through a list of these. However, there have been problems in supplying the medicines on the list because of delays in public procurement and budget limitations.[42] Private healthcare insurance exists but is not widely taken up, as most companies do not insure their workers.

Moreover, OSH regulations are largely ineffective due to structural problems. The Law on Occupational Health and Safety obliges businesses to ensure workers' safety in several ways, yet a study by BIRN Kosovo shows widespread and systemic disregard for these rules.[43] Businesses often operate without trained OSH personnel, and nearly a quarter do not provide their workers with

health certificates despite a legal obligation to do so.[44] The probable causes for this disregard are a lack of oversight on compliance with the regulations and a failure to enforce non-compliance. The Labor Inspectorate confirms the lack of compliance. In 2024, 12 000 inspections were carried out and identified the following: 8 710 cases in which medical examination certificates were not provided to workers; 4 118 cases of workers without training in OSH; 604 cases in which no risk assessment was conducted; 3 003 cases in which fire-fighting equipment was not present on the business premises; and 523 cases in which no emergency first-aid provisions were available.[45] Furthermore, 609 workplace accidents and seven workplace fatalities related to accidents were reported in 2024. Whilst the number of fatalities has been decreasing in the last few years, the lack of enforcement of OSH regulations is problematic. The Employment Strategy 2024-2028 recognizes the ineffective implementation of OSH regulations and the limited resources of the Labor Inspectorate as important challenges to improving working conditions.[46]

Social Dialogue

Social dialogue in Kosovo remains inadequate, the NSG reports. The Economic and Social Council (ESC) is an institution dedicated to social dialogue consisting of 15 members including representatives of social partners and the government.[47] It allows for dispute resolution through bilateral or tripartite agreements. However, data shows that the ESC is non-functional and that the government made no efforts to use it in 2024.[48]

Whilst trade unions are represented on the ESC, most trade unions in Kosovo are organized to protect the interests of civil servants and public enterprise employees. These unions organized several strikes in 2024, mainly to express dissatisfaction over wage levels. [49] In the private sector, there is no genuine union organization aimed at protecting workers' interests.[50]



Social Inclusion and Protection

SCORE: 73

Access to childcare

Participation in early childhood education is low in Kosovo, with only 8.9% of children under five enrolled in preschool education in the 2023-2024 school year.[51] A major factor is the lack of available public infrastructure: only 62 public kindergartens in the country. (Though this is insufficient, it is still more than the 49 in 2022.) There are 177 private kindergartens, but the combined total of 239 facilities do not meet the needs of the population.[52] Access to private kindergartens is also limited by their cost, as highlighted in the gender equality section mentioned above. There are also significant regional disparities, and nine municipalities have no public kindergarten at all.

The lack of public facilities and the high cost of private options prevent many children from low-income families and from rural areas from accessing early childhood education services. Children under five in rural areas are three times less likely to have access to early childhood education and care facilities, according to a report by the World Bank.[53] UNICEF's annual report on Kosovo for 2024, too, highlights the impact of socio-economic inequalities on access to education.[54] The OECD's report on the Competitiveness Outlook in the Western Balkans identified a lack of affordable quality childcare as a key issue for Kosovo.[55] A 2024 study by the Musine Kokalari Institute shows how the lack of developed care infrastructure and services pushes women in rural areas to spend more time on unpaid care work compared to those in urban areas.[56]

Education, health, and social welfare services for early childhood are fragmented, but some positive steps are being taken to integrate them. The Early Childhood Education Law, adopted in 2023, establishes a legal basis for intersectoral coordination and the integration of these services.[57] The World Bank approved the Early Childhood Education and Care for Kosovo's Human Capital Project in May 2024. This project focuses on capacity building and staff training to improve quality and access.[58] Nevertheless, the services do not yet meet the population's needs.

Another problem for public institutions and facilities is accessibility: 90% do not allow full access by persons with disabilities, according to a study by Internews Kosova.[59]

Good practice:

Pristina, Kosovo's capital city, has launched a new social assistance and childcare programme aimed at families below the national poverty line. As a part of this programme, it launched a public call in November 2024 to promote the enrolment of children in private preschool institutions.[60] The programme offers families € 70 subsidy to enrol in private preschool, reducing the financial burden. In fact, some families are forced to enrol in private preschool due to the limited places and long waiting lists for public preschools. The second public call, also launched in November 2024, seeks to provide financial support to NGO projects that offer social and familial services to individuals, families, and vulnerable groups in Pristina.[61] This call targets organizations focused on social protection, the provision of social and family services, research, analysis, capacity building, drafting strategic documents, and supporting individuals and families in need of professional social services.

Access to essential services

There is a shortage of essential services in Kosovo despite significant investments by the government, the NSG reports. While access to the internet and cable television is good, outdated electrical infrastructure causes power outages during periods of increased consumption.[62] In 2023, only 79% of the population had access to public water-supply systems, and around 65% had access to public sewage systems, according to official statistics.[63] Municipal waste management plans and local collections covered only about half the territory in 2023.[64] Public transport relies heavily on buses, and there is little or no railroad infrastructure. (For more detail, see the section on access to sustainable transport.)

The national public healthcare system does not have sufficient resources to cover the health needs of all citizens, as acknowledged and emphasized in the 2024 National Health Strategy.[65] The Strategy highlights how the limited budget for the public health sector leads to a significant gap between patients' needs and what the system can provide. Families are therefore forced to bear the costs of healthcare services and goods such as medicines when the public system does not provide them.



Civic Space

SCORE: 67

The CIVICUS Monitor continues to classify the civic space in Kosovo as “Narrowed”, a status that has remained unchanged since 2018.[66] This classification indicates that, while individuals and civil society organizations can exercise their rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression, these rights are often violated through harassment, arrests or assaults against critics of those in power, as well as through excessive force during protests and political pressure on the media.

Enabling space for civil Society

The NSG describes the space for civil society in 2024 as generally favourable but highlights the need to address certain persistent issues. The Constitution of Kosovo guarantees the freedom of expression, association and assembly for all citizens, including marginalized communities and groups. Moreover, inclusive mechanisms are in place for public consultations, such as online consultation platforms and working groups on policy initiatives that include civil society representatives. As such, the legal environment in which NGOs operate in Kosovo is generally favourable and welcoming to CSO participation. CSOs played an active role in designing, implementing and monitoring reforms related to EU integration. CSOs were also noticeably engaged in areas including transparency, human rights protection, and legal reforms. In the field of labour rights, NGO forums that deal directly with labour rights issues are organised. One example is the Labour Rights Consortium, a consortium of organizations and workers' representatives, which brings together 41 actors specialized in labour and trade union issues.[67]

However, the NSG points out several challenges, including how the effectiveness of public funding for NGOs is reported and evaluated. In addition, consultation and cooperation mechanisms still need to be improved to ensure effective and sustainable engagement by all civil society actors. There were several cases of government hostility against CSOs in 2024.[68] At the end of January, police raided the offices of the Centre for Peace and Tolerance. The Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered the raid on the

grounds that the premises were supposedly being used for the “unlawful exercise of medical or pharmaceutical activities”. The NGO disputes this allegation. It says it only provided medical assistance to Kosovo Serbs living in Prishtina and described the raid as a direct attack on civil society. In February, Deputy Prime Minister Bislimi accused several Kosovo Serb NGOs of actively hindering the integration of Serbian citizens into Kosovan society. Deputy Minister of Public Administration Vokri made similar claims and accused Kosovo Serb NGOs of pushing a Serbia-aligned agenda. These claims highlight the ongoing ethnic tensions in Kosovan society, as mentioned in the section on social dialogue.



Just Transition

SCORE: 72

Access to sustainable mobility and transport poverty

Public transport in Kosovo is inadequate, the NSG reports. Only 46% of municipalities fulfilled mobility plans to provide basic public transportation, official data shows.[69] Interurban transport relies solely on private bus lines. While these require licenses, standards are not monitored strictly. Operators are not coordinated, and they do not communicate, resulting in confusion and differences in schedules and ticket pricing.[70] No real alternative is available, as Kosovo's railway system is extremely poor, with only one line being functional.[71] The government started to invest in the rehabilitation of the country's railways in 2022, but the work only expected to be completed by 2027.[72] Thus, all transport for the foreseeable future will be by car or bus. These vehicles are mostly fossil-fuel-based, and even old diesel engines still allowed to circulate unrestricted as eco-diesel vehicle standards do not exist. Heavy trucks and transport vehicles are still allowed to circulate in urban zones. Ecological alternatives such as electric cars receive little in the way of public incentives, and electric car taxes are the same as those cars.[73] The government has begun an initiative to remove taxes on electric vehicles, but this law has not yet been fully adopted.

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