Gresa Smolica and Olsë Kajtazi
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Labour shortages due to automation

Assessment of Kosovo's Regulatory Framework against Job Displacements Due to Automation

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Publisher
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung e.V.
Godesberger Allee 149
53175 Bonn
info@fes.de

Responsibility for content and editing
Katharina Hofmann

Contact
Rudina Nallbani
rudina.nallbani@fes.de

Design/Layout
Trembelat

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Trembelat

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 This policy brief was developed as part of the project “Assessing the Resilience of Kosovar Society to Ecological and Institutional Shocks”. A comprehensive scoring database, which underpins the analysis presented herein, is available upon request. Please send your requests to info@re-actlab.org.

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Content

Recommendations

The following key recommendations are proposed to build a more resilient regulatory and societal framework:

- **Establish a Public-Private Council:** Foster collaboration between the government, education providers, and businesses (including chambers of commerce) to align education with market demands. This council would update curricula, forecast future skills needs, offer co-financed training programs, and expand work-based learning opportunities.

- **Reactivate the Social Economic Council:** Strengthen social dialogue and cooperation between trade unions, employer associations, and governmental ministries to facilitate exchanges on labour market issues, including emerging trends and rapid response to shifts.

- **Expand Labour Market Data Collection:** The Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers should collect comprehensive real-time data on job vacancies, skill demand and supply, labour market flows, the gig economy, and wage differentials by industry, occupation, and region/municipality.

- **Enhance and Promote the Superpuna Platform:** Tailor the professional training component of the Superpuna platform to offer skills required by the job market, ensuring adequate programs through cooperation with businesses, professional schools, and sectoral institutions. Promote the platform widely to young workers.

- **Create a Joint Rapid Response Unit:** Establish a unit, in cooperation between the Employment Agency and the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, to provide targeted and immediate support for significant sectoral shifts or widespread job displacements. This includes rapid reintegration job fairs, transitional income support linked to reskilling, and activation of training centres.

Acknowledgement

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Introduction

In 2013, results from a research study on job susceptibility toward computerisation were a turning point for different groups of the population. This study indicated that within two decades, almost half the jobs in the United States could be automated. While international organisations, researchers and academia quickly caught up and tried to either deepen such research or counter such findings, among the population, the panic toward automation continued to rise. The presence of policy challenges such as an ageing population, migration due to different socio-economic and political reasons, the rise of the knowledge economy, etc., was further exacerbated throughout and post-COVID-19 pandemic. As jobs become more digital, technical and analytical, workers with routine skills become more vulnerable.

This policy brief is part of a series of analyses assessing the resilience of Kosovo's regulatory framework in addressing institutional shocks. In this brief, we analyse the resilience of such a framework in addressing labour shifts caused by automation, as a long-term stressor which, over time, significantly changes or influences social systems. To do so, we first construct a regulatory framework consisting of relevant strategies, laws, policies, and interventions in place related to labour market in Kosovo; second, this framework is assessed relying on the OECD's classification of shocks and the 4Rs of Resilience methodology: Robustness, Redundancy, Resourcefulness, and Rapidity. Each component of the regulatory framework is assessed through a structured scoring system, with the total resilience score normalised into a percentage for comparative analysis.

In Kosovo, studies reveal an outdated education system which contributes to difficulties for firms in finding qualified employees, thus slowly shifting towards automation to fill labour shortages.

We find that while advancements in automation offer potential for increased efficiency and productivity, they also pose significant challenges to labour markets. Challenges observed across the European Union (EU) are mirrored in the Western Balkans, including Kosovo. The region's con-

centration in lower productivity sectors and barriers to automation, such as skill gaps and educational deficiencies, make it particularly susceptible to job losses. In Kosovo, studies reveal an outdated education system which contributes to difficulties for firms in finding qualified employees, thus slowly shifting towards automation to fill labour shortages.

The assessment of Kosovo's regulatory framework reveals a low resilience toward this shock, reaching an overall score of 47%. As per our methodology, such a score indicates weak, inconsistent, or incomplete measures in place to respond to a stressor, in this case, labour shifts due to automation. While some recent strategies acknowledge the skills mismatch, older foundational laws lack provisions for structural labour market shifts or rapid crisis response. Most notably, the Law on Labour's failure to address automation risks showcases the limited redundancy across the framework and the minimal rapidity in response mechanisms.

In light of these findings, the brief emphasises the urgent need for a proactive and adaptable regulatory framework to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of automation. Considering that a long-term stressor like automation requires sustainable and non-project-based interventions, the brief recommends the establishment of a public-private council to align education with market demands, reactivation of the Social Economic Council to strengthen social dialogue, expansion of labor market data collection, enhancement of existing platforms for professional training, and the creation of a joint rapid response unit.

Methodology

The policy brief is part of a larger research conducted on institutional shocks that Kosovo faces. The research employs a systematic policy analysis framework designed to assess the resilience of Kosovo's existing regulatory framework (policies, laws, bylaws, strategies, governmental documents, etc.) against several shocks. The research process followed a structured process consisting of three main phases: (i) identifying the nature of the shock, (ii) assessing the current policy responses through a scoring system, and (iii) developing recommendations based on the findings and best practices.

The classification of the nature of the shocks is based on the framework developed by the OECD in 2014, as explained in the table below:

Table 1. Classification of shocks.[1]

Type of shock	Characteristics	Examples
Covariate Shocks (Widespread, Systemic and Infrequent)	Large-scale events that affect a large portion of the population at once. They are not frequent, but their impact is widespread and systemic.	Violent Conflict and political crises, pandemic and health crises, large-scale natural disasters, cybersecurity and hybrid threats.
Seasonal Shocks (Recurring, Predictable and Localised)	Periodic shocks that occur at regular intervals, often linked to seasonal changes or climate patterns. Usually predictable, but inadequate preparedness can exacerbate their impact.	Annual floodings and droughts, heatwaves and cold snaps, seasonal food insecurities, recurring health risks.
Long-Term Stressors (Gradual, Cumulative and Systemic Erosion of Resilience)	Unlike shocks, long-term stressors develop slowly over time and weaken societal systems. These are often structural, environmental, economic or social shocks requiring policy responses.	Environmental degradation, demographic shifts, economic stagnation and inequality, weak institutions and governance.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the regulatory framework in countering various shocks, we build upon the 4Rs of Resilience framework. This framework assesses policies against four key dimensions of resilience:

Table 2. The 4Rs of Resilience Framework

Framework	Category	Definition
4Rs of Resilience	Robustness	The strength, or the ability of elements, systems and other units of analysis to withstand a given level of stress or demand without suffering degradation or loss of function.
	Redundancy	The availability of alternative resources in the recovery process of a system.
	Resourcefulness	The capacity to identify problems, establish priorities, and mobilise resources when conditions exist that threaten to disrupt some element, system, or other unit of analysis.
	Rapidity	The capacity to meet priorities and achieve goals in a timely manner in order to contain losses and avoid future disruption

Each source identified as part of the regulatory framework addressing the shocks is evaluated against the 4Rs framework using a structured scoring system, as explained below:

Table 3. Scoring system based on the 4Rs Framework

Scoring	
Robustness	0: No robustness—policy does not address stability in the face of shocks. 1: Weak or symbolic measures with little enforcement. 2: Moderate mechanisms exist, but they are inconsistently applied. 3: Strong, well-enforced mechanisms ensuring stability.
Redundancy	0: No redundancy—failure of the main system leads to collapse. 1: Minimal or informal alternatives that are unreliable. 2: Some redundancy, but gaps exist in coverage or efficiency. 3: Well-integrated redundancy ensuring continuity under stress.
Resourcefulness	0: No resourcefulness—reactive rather than proactive approach. 1: Limited adaptability - response mechanisms are weak or ad hoc. 2: Moderate ability to mobilise resources, but gaps remain. 3: Highly flexible and well-coordinated response mechanisms.
Rapidity	0: No rapid response mechanisms—delayed or absent reactions. 1: Slow and bureaucratic response with major inefficiencies. 2: Moderate speed, but some bottlenecks exist. 3: Highly efficient, fast-track response ensuring swift action.

The total policy resilience score (0-12) is then normalised into a percentage, enabling comparative evaluation across different policies and sectors.

Resilience score = SUM (Total score/12) x 100

Table 4. Scoring interpretation

Scoring Interpretation		
0-25% (0-3 points)	Very Low Resilience	The policy makes the society highly vulnerable to shocks, offering little protection or response capability.
26-50% (4-6 points)	Low Resilience	Some resilience measures exist, but they are either weak, inconsistent, or incomplete.
51-75% (7-9 points)	Moderate Resilience	The policy provides a reasonable level of preparedness and response, but some critical gaps remain.
76-100% (10-12 points)	High Resilience	The policy is well-designed, with strong mechanisms ensuring stability, adaptability, and quick response.

For more detailed research methodology, please refer to the Policy Analysis Framework developed for this research. You can find it in this link.

Narrowing down automation and its effects on labour markets

After the COVID-19 outbreak, technological developments took off at an increasingly high speed to address the gaps created from the period when the world 'slowed down'. While such developments were not entirely new and their potential was highly praised especially in the last decades, after the pandemic, we were able to witness their impact in different practical spheres. Among such developments, task automation has been widely discussed as a new dynamic in labour market organisation. Automation technologies are defined as technologies that can replace human labour input with machine input in different tasks of economic processes.[2] As these technologies advance, concerns over workers' replacement increase. The labour shifts due to automation are a 'long-term stressor' which weakens the societal and institutional systems, leading to demographic shifts and economic stagnation.

Several debates surround the impact of automation in labour markets and employment generally. The famous study conducted by Frey and Osborne in 2013 examining how susceptible jobs are to computerisation, found that 47% of all persons employed in the United States are working jobs that could be automated within the next 10-20 years. In Europe, such susceptibility to automation is found to be between 45-60% of jobs - data on Figure 1 shows that European countries are close to the 40% already. On the other hand, the main critique toward the automation "panic" suggests that automation usually targets tasks rather than occupations. Additionally, the whole concept of substituting humans for robots or machines to perform a job consists of legal and ethical challenges that make the substitution as a concept very difficult to actually happen.[3]

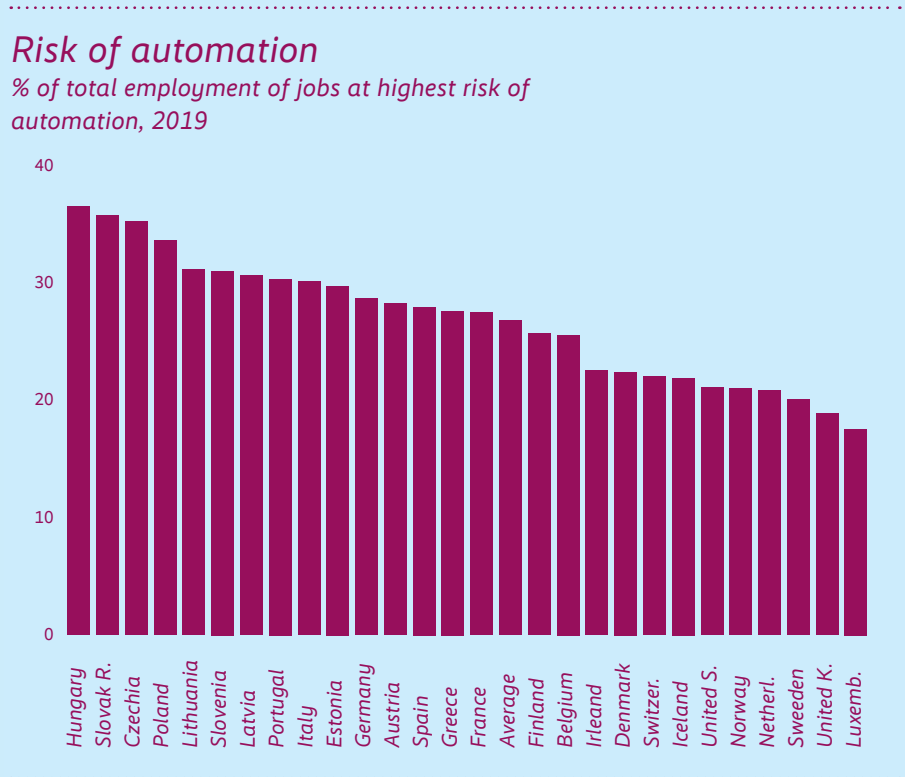

Figure 1. % of employment of jobs at highest risk of automation. (Source: Lassebie and Quintini (2022) What skills and abilities can automation technologies replicate and what does it mean for workers? New evidence, OECD)

Despite the arguments that machines will not fully substitute jobs, the initial assumption that machines can only replace routine tasks is now facing significant challenges. Advancements in machine learning, especially, have led to increased machine capabilities in performing tasks that require thinking and reasoning (e.g. automated driving), also known as genuinely human tasks.[4] Yet most of the challenge does not come from machines only. Studies find that after the pandemic outbreak, labour markets saw massive quits from workers, leaving organisations struggling to secure labour and leading to supply-demand imbalances.[5] Against such developments, a new challenge arises for governments around the world - balancing the effects of automation, which is supposed to bring more efficiency at the cost of a rapidly changing labour market composition.

Automation technologies are defined as technologies that can replace human labour input with machine input in different tasks of economic processes.

Yet, most of what we know until now is based on predictions and estimations. So, how can we analyse the labour market shift dynamics due to automation? Labour shortages due to automation gradually build up through a series of events and weaken the ability of systems to adapt and respond, placing them in the category of long-term stressors.[6] More concretely, it refers to the disequilibrium in the labour market caused by skills mismatch between labour demand and supply, mainly due to extensive automation in recent years.

As shown in Figure 2, workers in sectors such as construction, production, and logistics are most affected by such shifts as their job-related skills are considered routine skills that can easily be replaced by advanced technological robotics and systems. Re-entering the workforce has become more difficult in such cases, as labour market needs have shifted toward digital, technical, and analytical skills.[7] As such, to make sure sectors such as manufacturing stay alive, empowering and reskilling the workforce becomes essential.[8]

Degree of automation

Ranking of occupations from highest to lowerst risk of automatability

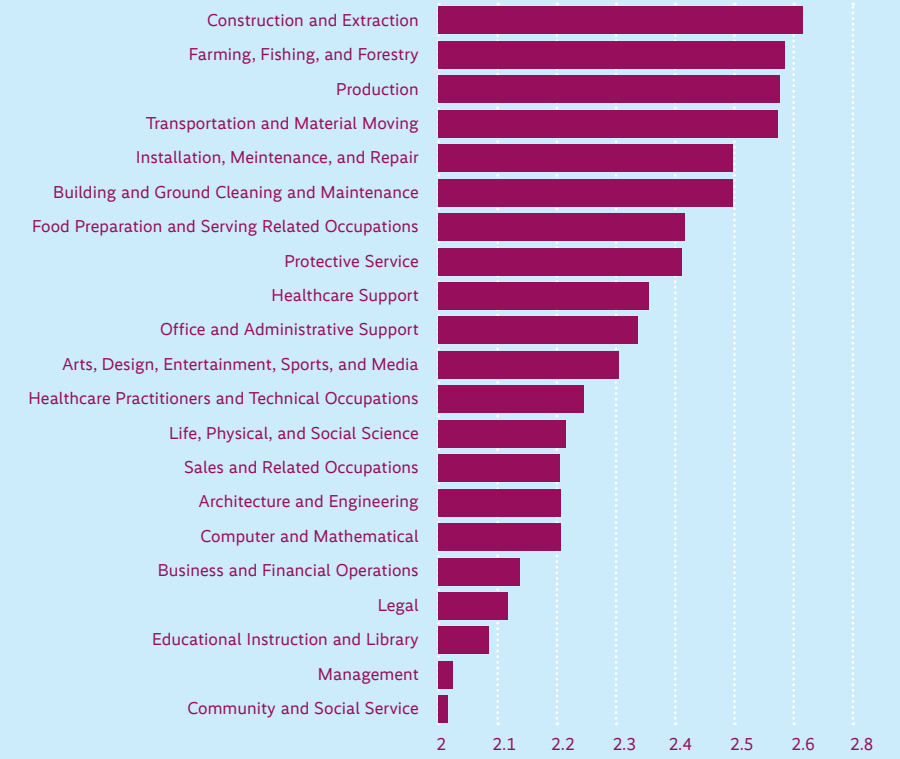

Figure 2. Ranking of occupations based on their risk/degree of automatability, from highest to lowest. (Source: Lassebie and Quintini, 2022)

However, neither individuals nor firms are putting much effort into effective re-skilling to align with market demands. Employers are inclined to invest in their high-performing or high-value employees, leaving those most at risk behind.[9,10] Despite many jobs being created and vacant positions remaining unfilled, different areas are facing high unemployment rates, mostly due to the continuously increasing skills gap, high migration and demographic changes among the working population. Rather than a temporary problem, this labour market transformation is a long-term issue that requires proactive strategies and policies to minimise its consequences.[11]

Challenges found across the EU are also present in the Western Balkans region. While in the former several remedies are already at work to address this phenomenon, across the Western Balkans, threats of job and skill losses are ever present. The concentration of employment in lower productivity sectors makes the region more prone to job losses due to automation. However, there are several issues to consider when analysing the impact of automation in this region. Although there is a higher concentration on sectors where automation can substitute some tasks, the region also faces automation barriers such as lack of skills and gaps in education that could allow an amplification of automation potential that goes hand in hand with a more developed workforce. According to a 2020 World Bank report, routine tasks comprise a large share of tasks for workers across the region. Workers very rarely engage in non-routine tasks that include learning something new or solving more complex problems. Generally ,across the Western Balkans, the probability of automation reaches 50%, a higher share than the one found across the EU.[12]

Similar patterns are found in Kosovo as well. Most studies have focused on the quality of education in preparing young people to enter the workforce. Here, there are rising concerns regarding Kosovo's education system, as experts consider it outdated, particularly in vocational training. Although Kosovo has universal access to education, Kosovars tend to have lower educational attainment compared to Europeans.[13] Another issue continues to be educational quality, as reports show 70-80% of students do not attain basic proficiency in reading, math and science. The same World Bank report finds that in terms of quality of education, a child in Kosovo is 5 years behind a child in Singapore and 4 years behind a child in Lithuania.[14] Levels of education also play a role, especially in whether later workers of a certain education level will face automation risks. In Kosovo, workers with tertiary education appear as the least in risk of their job/tasks being automated in comparison with lower and upper secondary education.[15]

The effects of this issue significantly influence firms to hire through informal channels, as they do not fully trust formal qualifications, which directly affects job seekers without networks.[16] 52% of companies interviewed in a study conducted in Kosovo on skills gap reported difficulties in finding qualified employees, primarily because most interested candidates lacked the skills required to work in retail. These included essential soft skills for front-line roles, such as communication and adaptability. Additionally, as most firms in this sector have undergone digitalisation in recent years, basic ICT skills have become increasingly important, yet many applicants failed to meet this requirement. Youth aged 18-20 were particularly disadvantaged, as the majority lacked prior work experience, making it harder for them to compete in the hiring process. Among the group of people who lacked the skills required in the retail labour market, young people aged 18-24, in particular women, have the largest mismatch.[17] Similar findings follow other sectors as well in Kosovo. In a recent interview with an agro-economy expert in Kosovo, it was highlighted that many firms operating in the agriculture sector have turned to automation to make up for the labour shortages and the lack of workers in this sector.[18]

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Vacancies by occupation groups

Difficulty filling vacancies by occupational group (%)

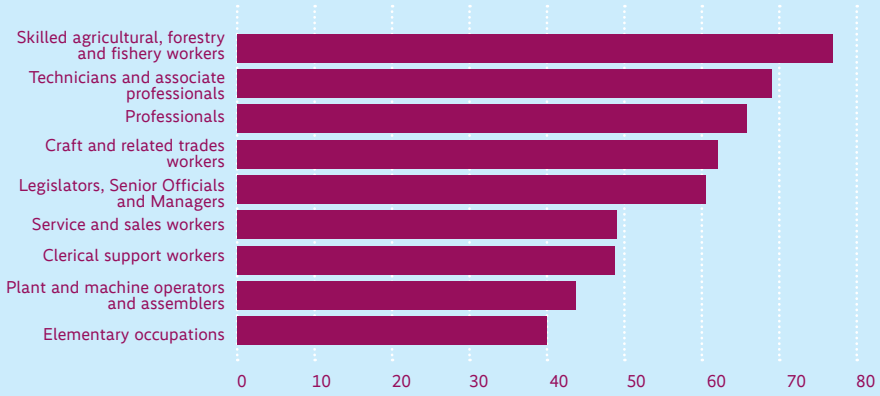

Figure 3. Ranking of occupation groups based on the difficulty firms are facing in finding respective workforce. (Source: Krasniqi, B., et al. (2022) Kosovo Skills Barometer 1.0)

Results from Kosovo's Skills Barometers in 2021, as shown in Figure 3, confirm such concerns. Agricultural workers, forestry workers and technicians are some of the occupations for which firms in Kosovo are mostly struggling to find workers.

Looking at the other angle of automation brings interesting results as well. Nowadays, automation is seen as a tool that helps increase efficiency at work and amplify productivity. When it comes to integrating automation in their daily work, a recent survey conducted by Kosovo 2.0 found that almost half of the respondents use AI-powered tools more than once during the day to complete different tasks of their jobs. Such support was mostly sought in tasks such as research, content creation, data analysis, etc. Most importantly, 77% of the respondents answered that they do not think AI-powered tools will replace their jobs or are not worried about such a scenario.[19]

In the current situation, the region and Kosovo, more specifically, find themselves at a new crossroads in the challenging process of efficiently organising their workforce and dealing with the shock of labour shifts due to automation. On the one hand, there are expectations for increasing demands from emerging sectors such as ICT, green energy, and robotics, requiring a careful revision of current curricula to ensure the new generation of the workforce is equipped with such skills. On the other hand, the high rates of migration are pushing companies and current job providers to rely on automation and technological tools to make up for the missing "hands on deck". On the prior, if the system fails to equip individuals, especially youth, with the skills aligned with market needs, this will not only affect the growth of the mentioned sectors but also economic growth in general, leading to potentially long-term structural underemployment.[20,21] On the latter, long-term reliance on automation can lead to the disappearance of certain jobs, which could further add to the imbalance in labour market organisation.

Long-term reliance on automation can lead to the disappearance of certain jobs, which could further add to the imbalance in labour market organisation.

Regulatory Framework

Kosovo's regulatory framework to address and resolve this shock consists of laws, national strategies, and foreign-funded projects. Although many of the identified components of the regulatory framework precede the existence of automation as a shock in Kosovo, it brings to the discussion how future-proof such frameworks are, their ability to respond to unforeseen challenges, and what new elements must be brought forward to complement such frameworks. A resilient regulatory framework allows institutions to better manage labour market disruptions and shocks, however, currently this framework remains weak and outdated in the face of today's evolving challenges.

The Constitution, as the supreme legal authority of Kosovo, establishes the principles of equality, social justice, and a market economy, forming the foundation for labour market regulation and policies (Article 7). It guarantees every individual the freedom to choose and work in their preferred profession under legally established conditions (Article 49). Additionally, the Constitution highlights the importance of protecting children's rights in the context of the labour market, particularly from economic exploitation and unsafe working conditions (Article 50). It mandates the creation of social and health protection services, which are essential for supporting the workforce and addressing issues related to unemployment and underemployment (Article 51). Despite offering a broad legal framework, the Constitution does not specifically address labour market shocks or structural unemployment.[22]

A resilient regulatory framework allows institutions to better manage labour market disruptions and shocks, however, currently this framework remains weak and outdated in the face of today's evolving challenges.

The Law on Labour is one of the main laws related to the labour market. It establishes the basis for rights, obligations, and responsibilities in employment relationships in Kosovo. The Law requires that all employment arrangements between employer and employee be formalised through writ-

ten contracts, clearly specifying agreed terms and conditions. To promote fair and safe working conditions, it defines working hours, rest periods, and overtime. It also guarantees employees access to annual leave, maternity and paternity leave, and other forms of leave that support their well-being. As protection for both parties, the Law sets clear procedures for contract termination, including notice periods and severance pay. Although it provides a solid framework for employment relationships, it lacks provisions and mechanisms to respond to labour market crises.[23]

The Law for Vocational Education and Training presents a dual approach to education, where theoretical learning is combined with practical training. It defines apprenticeships as valuable and long-term experiences that contribute to this approach. The law instructs the integration of labour market demands into the education system as a way of equipping youth with the skills required for employment. It encourages the alignment of the vocational education system (VET) with market requirements and promotes practical training following economic, scientific and technological developments, an initiative that reflects a positive direction toward building a skilled and specialised workforce. However, it does not include mechanisms specifically designed to respond to market disruptions such as widespread labour shortages.[24]

The purpose of t**he Law on Scientific Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology** is to promote scientific research, technological development, and innovation. By supporting the commercialization of scientific knowledge, the law aims to encourage innovation and develop a knowledge-based economy. It establishes various forms of innovation infrastructure and facilitates cooperation between governmental institutions, universities, and the private sector. Its goals include improving research capacity, enhancing the practical use of innovation, aligning scientific work with economic development needs, and creating financing mechanisms such as innovation funds and incentives. However, the law does not directly address automation-driven labour shortages, nor does it provide mechanisms for swift responses to workforce displacement or reskilling needs.[25]

The Law on Industrial and Technological Parks establishes a framework for the creation of industrial and technological zones, with the aim of attracting investment, supporting technological progress, and stimulating job creation. It mandates the formation of park management structures and allows for governance flexibility in ownership, administration, and financing. The law also enables the provision of incentives and promotes collaboration among a range of stakeholders, including public authorities, private entities, and educational institutions. However, job shortages resulting from automation are not directly addressed, nor does the law provide mechanisms such as training or reskilling for workers affected by technological change.[26]

The Employment Agency was established in 2014, following the ratification of **the Law on the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo**. The law mandates the Agency to manage employment services, including the regis-

tration of job seekers and vacancies, and offering services such as guidance, counselling, and job matching. It is also the Agency's responsibility to oversee regional vocational training centres to ensure they fulfil their role in strengthening the skills of job seekers. Furthermore, its mandate includes conducting labour market analysis to support the design and implementation of effective labour market policies and programs. Similar to the previously mentioned law, the Law on the Employment Agency does not specifically address mechanisms to respond to unexpected labour market shocks.[27]

Although the primary objective of the **Kosovo Digital Economy (KODE) Project** is not directly focused on addressing labour market shortages caused by automation, its efforts toward workforce development are noteworthy. Through initiatives such as the Youth Online and Upward (YOU) Program, which offers ICT training to both employed and unemployed young individuals, the project contributes to equipping the workforce with in-demand digital skills. More than 1300 young Kosovars have received training in ICT modules such as Java Programming, Web Development, Cyber Security, Python, Big Data Analytics, etc., so far through IPA 2017 and KODE Project. Additionally, more than 20 business-to-business (B2B) meetings have been held in Kosovo and four outside the country. By promoting digital inclusion and reducing urban-rural disparities in access to high-speed, high-quality internet, the project supports improved access to knowledge and can lead to better labour market outcomes.[28]

Work-based learning experiences, such as internships and apprenticeships, are seen as important for addressing labour demands, yet such opportunities remain limited for Kosovo's youth.

The National Development Strategy and Plan 2030 acknowledges the skills mismatch as a key challenge facing Kosovo and recognises the need for government action to mitigate it. As a result, it includes specific strategic objectives that address this shock, including: developing skills, competencies and narrowing the gap in the labour market, increasing the participation of women in the labour market, and better alignment of education with the needs of the labour market. For example, its strategic objectives include increasing women's labour market participation to 40% by 2026 and 50% by 2030. These objectives collectively aim to tackle structural unemployment and underemployment, reduce the share of an unskilled workforce, and prevent widening gender disparities, especially where access to upskilling is unequal, which can contribute to automation-driven labour shortages.[29]

Even though automation is not explicitly mentioned in the **Employment**

Strategy 2024–2028, its core issue - skills mismatch - is highlighted as one of the key labour market problems in recent years. The strategy emphasises the urgency of adapting Kosovo's workforce skills in line with global trends. This policy objective sets two clear targets: reducing the vertical skills mismatch among individuals aged 15–64 from 42% in 2020 to 38% by 2026, and increasing the share of adults aged 25–64 participating in training programmes to 10%. Work-based learning experiences, such as internships and apprenticeships, are seen as important for addressing labour demands, yet such opportunities remain limited for Kosovo's youth. It also draws attention to the need for better cooperation between the education system and labour market needs, in order to build a workforce that is resilient to automation and sectoral changes.[30]

The mentioned laws provide a foundational legal framework for the functioning of the labour market; however, they remain limited in addressing shocks or disruptions. This may be because most were developed years ago, and now require updates to reflect current labour market dynamics. In contrast, the more recent strategies acknowledge the need for government action to build a resilient workforce.

Applying the policy analytical framework

In this section, a thorough analysis of the regulatory framework listed above will be conducted by applying the 4Rs of resilience framework, which includes robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness, and rapidity. Each of the documents will be evaluated as per our methodology, as we aim to quantify how resilient the laws, strategies, and projects implemented in Kosovo are against a current labour market challenge, such as shifts driven by automation. Due to their significance in addressing our selected shock, eight sources were chosen for this analysis, including five laws, two national strategies, and a World Bank-sponsored project implemented by Kosovar institutions.

Law No.03/L –212 on Labour

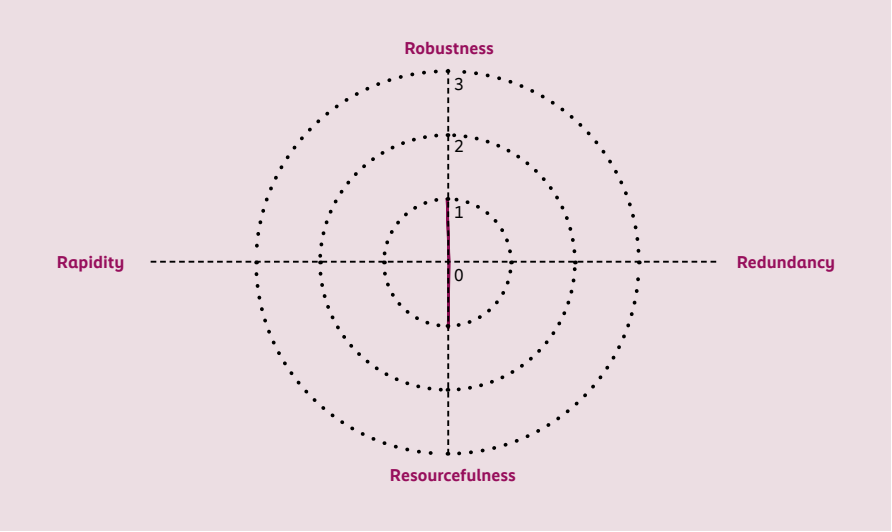

Figure 4: 4Rs Framework Assesment of the Law No. 03/L-212 on Labour. (Source: Own creation)

The Law on Labour remains fundamental in addressing all matters related to Kosovo's labour market. However, when facing a shock such as automation-induced labour shortages, its resilience is notably low, scoring only around 17%.

While the law covers traditional employment aspects such as working conditions, maternity leave (Article 49), and child protection (Article 45), it neither anticipates nor addresses risks related to automation or any structural shifts in the labour market, resulting in a robustness score of 1. There are no backup plans or fallback mechanisms in place for managing long-term

structural shifts. In the event of mass displacements or significant changes in the labour market, Kosovars would receive no institutional protection or support, rendering the law non-redundant - score 0. Although there is some legal flexibility, primarily regarding contract types (Articles 10-14), support for innovation and digital adoption is lacking, giving it a resourcefulness score of 1. In times of crisis, legal procedures are slow and rigid, with no fast-track mechanisms to enable a swift institutional response, thus, the law scores 0 for rapidity.

Although the law is effective in supporting common disputes in the labour market, it is necessary to align it with present challenges. While at the time the law was drafted, automation was not much of an issue, in today's world, it poses a significant threat to the workforce. Therefore, the law requires some changes to address this shock better.

Law No. 04/L-138 for Vocational Education and Training

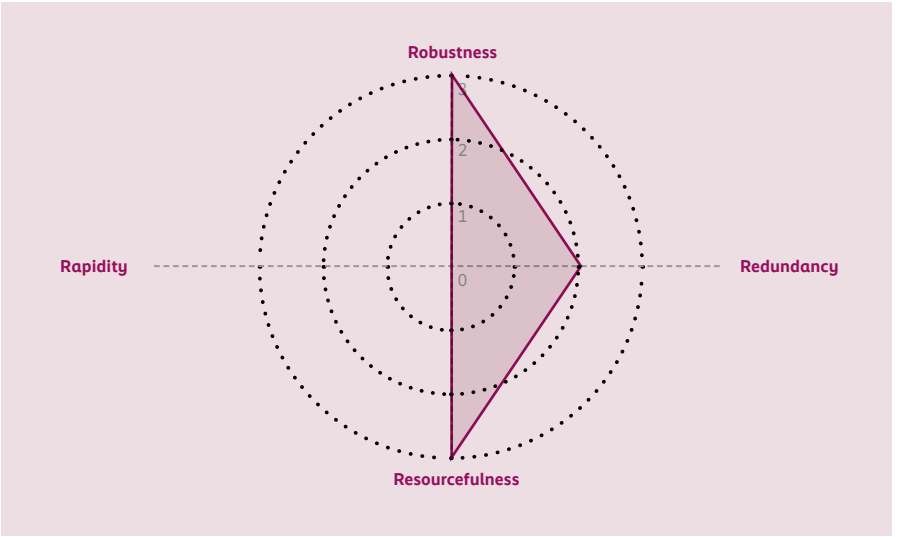

Figure 5: 4Rs Framework Assesment of the Law No. 04/L-138 for Vocational Education and Training. (Source: Own creation)

This law plays a key role in addressing this shock, as it aims to build a skilled workforce, an essential factor in preventing automation-driven labour shortages. In its current form, it receives an above-average resilience score of 67%.

Articles 11 and 12 of the law establish mechanisms to develop curricula based on labour market demand. It provides sufficient space for relevant institutions to align the education system with economic trends, equipping students with the demanded skills in the market. This provides an important avenue for institutions and the labour market in general, as in the situation of a shock or shifts, such as due to automation, there are mechanisms in place to prepare and guide the workforce. Therefore, in terms of robustness, the law receives a maximum score of 3. The law is somewhat redundant - score 2, as it does not offer emergency training programs or alternate delivery networks, but it emphasises lifelong learning and provides various forms of education.

The encouragement of multi-stakeholder involvement and the support for innovation and creativity in skills training give this law a high level of resourcefulness - score 3. This is demonstrated by the institutionalised participation of private sector actors and social partners through Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE) (Article 13) and Council of Vocational Educational and Training and for Adults (CVETA) (Articles 14–16), which coordinate international projects, develop occupational standards, and advise on VET policy reform. These mechanisms foster cross-sector cooperation and adaptable governance, key elements of resourcefulness as defined in the scoring matrix. However, despite the constant mention of reforms for upskilling, such processes take time, and no emergency plan or fast-track route for reskilling is provided, making the law non-rapid - score 0.

Even though the law demonstrates strong robustness and resourcefulness, and provides a moderate level of redundancy, the absence of mechanisms for rapid intervention remains a critical gap, especially in terms of the shock we are addressing. The surge of automation in workplaces requires a resilient response, in this case, fast-response measures to balance the effect of the shock.

Law No. 04/L-205 on the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo

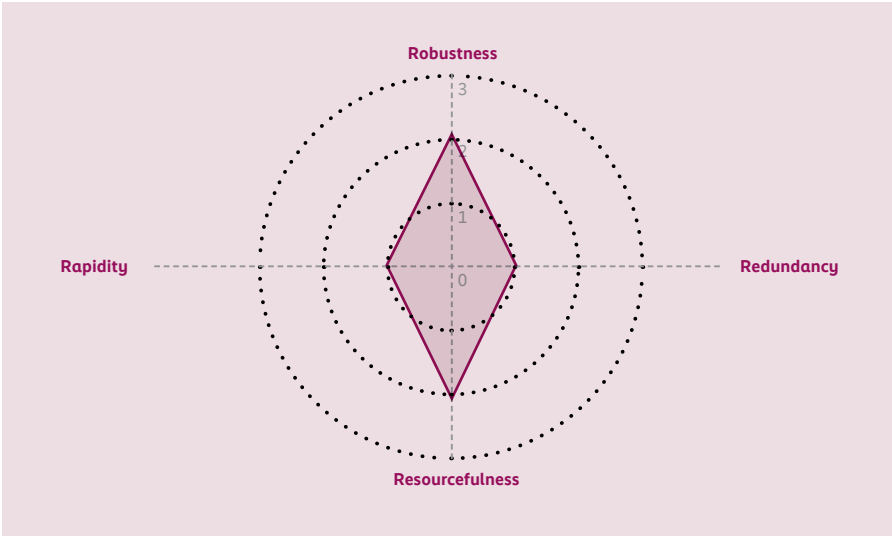

Figure 6: 4Rs Framework Assesment of the Law No. 04/L-205 on the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo. (Source: Own creation)

The establishment of the Employment Agency through dedicated legislation marks a significant step for Kosovo's labour market. While the Agency primarily serves as a regulatory body for employment-related matters, its mandate also includes workforce upskilling, making it directly relevant to addressing automation-driven labour shocks. In our assessment, the law governing the Agency achieved a resilience score of 50%.

The Agency's duties are clearly defined by law, with its central and local structures described in detail. (Articles 4-8) However, certain mechanisms, particularly those related to enforcement and quality control, are either vaguely defined or deferred to future sub-legal acts (Article 20), which may create implementation challenges. For this reason, the robustness of the law is considered moderate with a score of 2. While some service delivery is delegated to non-public providers (Article 2.4), no independent or clearly defined fallback system is established in the event of primary system failure, resulting in a redundancy score of 1.

Although the law does not actively promote innovation and remains difficult to operationalise, it does encourage collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including local actors, employers, and educational institutions (Articles 12-17). This multi-stakeholder engagement supports a moderate level of adaptability, earning the law a resourcefulness score of 2. Despite the presence of reporting (Article 11) and coordination structures, the law's rapidness is modest, scoring 1, as it lacks specific emergency protocols or fast-track mechanisms. In situations where the workforce faces mass layoffs and swift institutional action is required, the existing procedures remain bureaucratic and slow.

Similarly to the Law on Labour, although the foundations of this legislation are functional, policymakers should work toward aligning it with the current needs of the labour market. In particular, efforts should focus on strengthening redundancy and rapid response mechanisms to enhance the law's overall effectiveness in addressing future shocks.

Law No. 06/L-049 on Scientific Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology

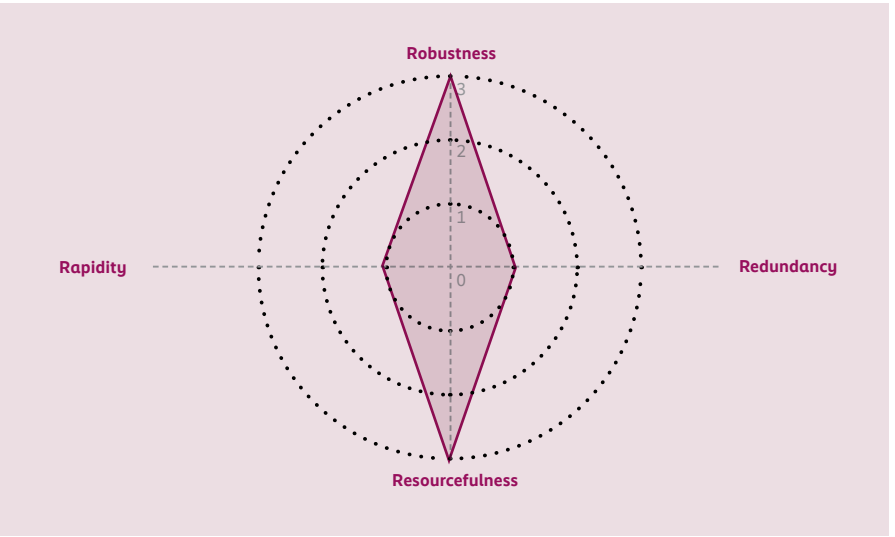

Figure 7: 4Rs Framework Assessment of the Law No. 06/L-049 on Scientific Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology. (Source: Own creation)

The Law on Scientific Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology creates a legal foundation for the development of Kosovo's innovation ecosystem. It seeks to develop a knowledge-based economy and encourage innovation-driven job creation by promoting research commercialisation and cooperation between academic institutions, governmental agencies, and the private sector. In our assessment, the law achieved a resilience score of 60%.

The law establishes the creation of innovation infrastructure such as incubators, scientific institutes, and technology transfer centres, and encourages strategic cooperation between higher education and industry. Long-term structural adaptation and the integration of the workforce displaced by automation are made possible by these institutional structures. As a result, the law has a high robustness score of 3. However, while the law introduces multiple actors within the innovation ecosystem, it does not include formal fallback procedures if certain partners or funding mechanisms underperform or fail. This limits the law's redundancy to a score of 1.

On resourcefulness, the law performs strongly. Through researcher-led spin-offs, co-financing schemes, and innovation vouchers, it encourages flexible implementation. The engagement of public and private actors in adapting innovation to market shifts supports institutional creativity and responsiveness, which results in a high resourcefulness score of 3. In contrast, rapidity is more limited. Although the law enables tools like startup support and technology accelerators, these require medium-term planning and lack emergency protocols or fast-track deployment in crisis scenarios. Thus, the law's rapidity is symbolic, scoring 1.

Overall, while this legislation is forward-looking and encourages structural innovation, it may be improved in terms of its ability to react quickly to labour disruptions brought on in this case by automation. Strengthening fallback capacity across institutions and operationalising fast-response procedures should be prioritised.

Law No. 08/L-208 on Industrial and Technological Parks

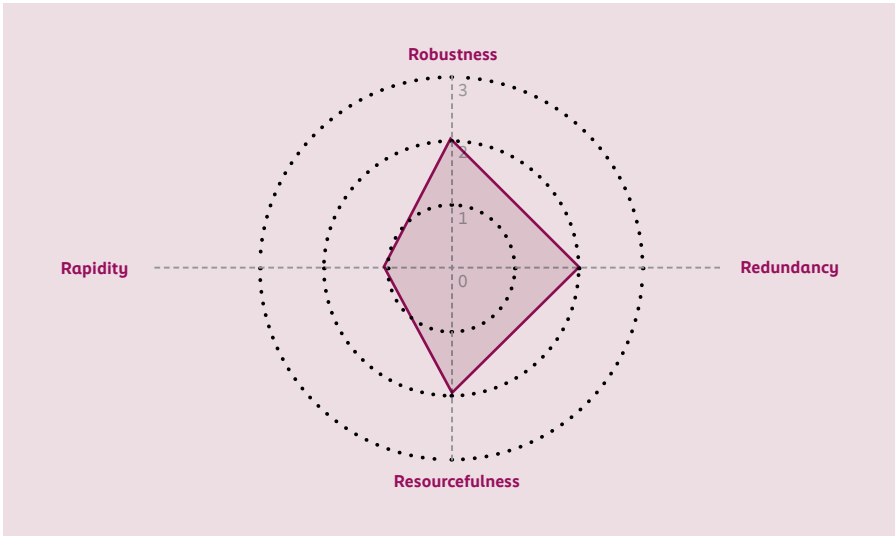

Figure 8: 4Rs Framework Assessment of the Law No. 08/L-208 on Industrial and Technological Parks. (Source: Own creation)

The Law on Industrial and Technological Parks establishes a framework for developing specialised economic zones in Kosovo, aiming to attract investment, promote technological advancement, and stimulate job creation. While it provides strong institutional and policy structures for infrastructure and private sector development, its direct relevance to automation-driven labour shortages remains limited. The legislation regarding industrial and technical parks received a resilience score of 45% in our evaluation.

The law facilitates incentive programs to encourage the creation of new industrial areas, integrates with national development plans, and provides a clear governance mechanism. It ensures long-term economic restructuring and institutional coordination, but does not directly address labour market disruptions caused by automation. Its robustness, therefore, is considered moderate with a score of 2. By supporting a diversity of park types and allowing for different forms of ownership and governance, the law promotes geographical and sectoral diversification. Its redundancy is limited, though, by the lack of specific contingency mechanisms, which also scores 2.

The law enables cooperation between government agencies, corporations, and academic institutions, as well as participation from the private sector and donors. This gives it a resourcefulness score of 2, indicating a moderate level of institutional flexibility and adaptation. However, rapidity remains weak. The policy is tied to long-term planning processes such as zoning, infrastructure, and investment cycles. It lacks mechanisms for swift labour reallocation or fast-track workforce integration in response to automation-related shocks, resulting in a rapidity score of 1.

Such legislation would be better utilised in the cases of labour disruptions if it incorporates employment-related protections and reskilling pathways into its park development framework. This would help align infrastructure investment with workforce resilience.

Kosovo Digital Economy (KODE) Project

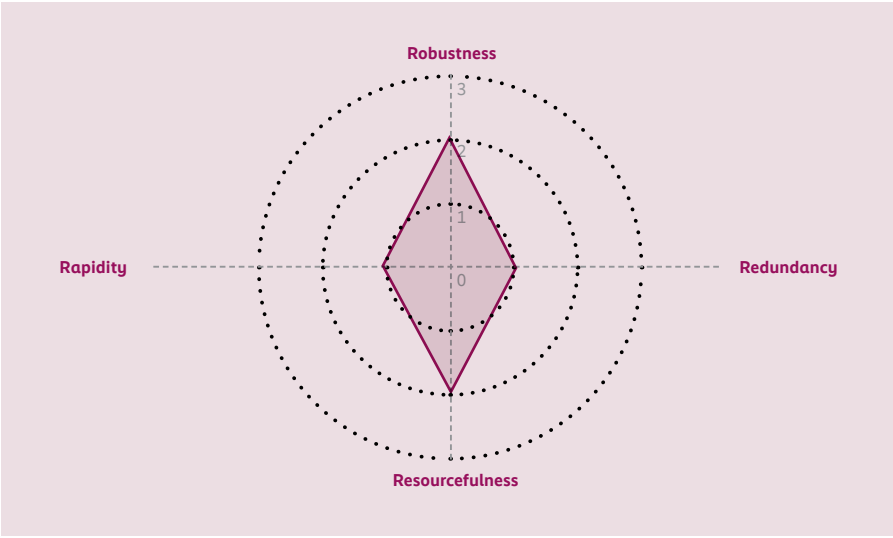

Figure 9: 4Rs Framework Assessment of KODE Project. (Source: Own creation)

The Kosovo Digital Economy (KODE) Project primarily supports the digitalisation of Kosovo's economy, with a key focus on expanding broadband access to underdeveloped and rural areas. However, its components aimed at equipping youth with digital skills are directly relevant to our study on automation-driven labour market shocks. The project demonstrates moderate resilience, receiving a score of 50% in our evaluation.

In the context of building a more resilient workforce against automation, the KODE Project offers support through digital infrastructure and skills training, including initiatives like the Youth Online and Upward (YOU) program. Such activities directly influence the diversification of the labour market and increase access to opportunities for a higher share of the workforce. However, other sectors of the labour market, beyond the digital domain, are not supported, resulting in a moderate robustness, scoring 2. The project lacks backup plans and does not offer alternatives for non-digital workers. Despite some cooperation with the private sector and a digital-focused strategy, its redundancy remains limited, with a score of 1.

The KODE Project promotes innovation and multi-stakeholder engagement, and it encourages resource mobilisation as well. However, due to the lack of rapid decision-making mechanisms, its resourcefulness is considered moderate, lending a score of 2. Designed as a long-term intervention, the project responds slowly in times of crisis, resulting in a rapidness score of 1. It is also worth considering that despite the project's longer timeline, it remains a project mostly funded by a foreign development agency, and in light of recent cuts, concerns increase on the sustainability of such interventions and the potential consequences in the scenarios of aid cuts or termination of such projects.

The National Development Strategy and Plan 2030

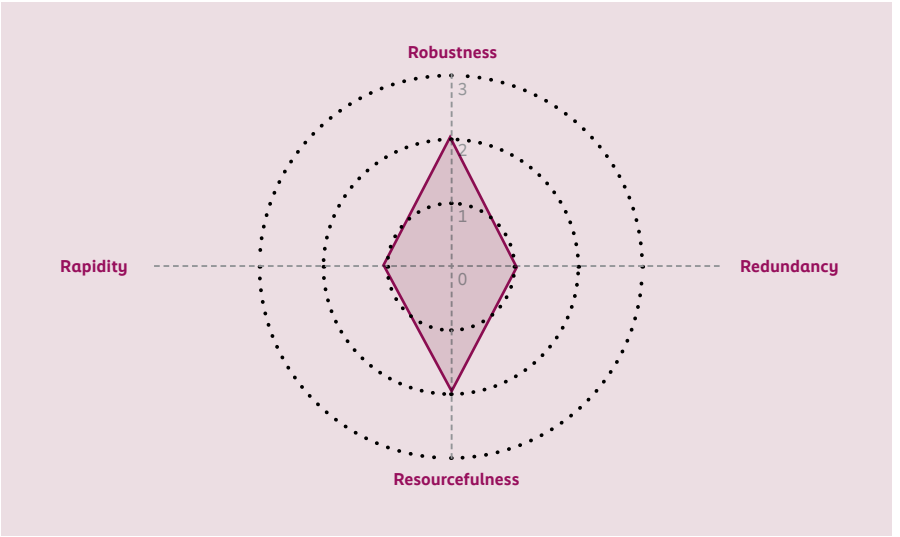

Figure 10: 4Rs Framework Assessment of the National Development Strategy and Plan 2030. (Source: Own creation)

The National Development Strategy and Plan (NDSP) 2030 includes digital transformation and skills enhancement as key objectives on the long-term pathway toward sustainable development. Its resilience was assessed as moderate, resulting in a score of 50%.

The NDSP 2030 is moderately robust (score 2), as it outlines a detailed plan for labour shifts due to automation and employment strategies by integrating the Kosovo Digital Agenda to strengthen ICT skills and infrastructure (Development Goals 1 and 5). However, it lacks regulatory instruments targeting non-digital sectors. This gap is closely linked to the document's minimal redundancy - score 1, as it does not include alternative or backup plans for workers in traditional sectors in the event of sudden labour disruptions or digital strategy failures.

Cross-sectoral collaboration and resource mobilisation under the Office of the Prime Minister, supported through various strategies and innovative programs, are promoted by the NDSP 2030. However, institutional capacity remains limited in non-digital sectors, affecting its resourcefulness - score 2. Its rapidity is minimal - score 1, as the strategy focuses on long-term development through specific objectives rather than establishing mechanisms for quick crisis response. As a result, institutions may respond slowly in the event of automation-driven mass layoffs.

The NDSP 2030 was developed with a clear focus on digitalisation and its related aspects, while neglecting other sectors, ultimately affecting its overall resilience. Policymakers should work toward creating comprehensive frameworks that include enforcement and response mechanisms, as well as skills training for non-digital sectors, in order to better mitigate the consequences of future labour market shocks.

The Employment Strategy 2024–2028

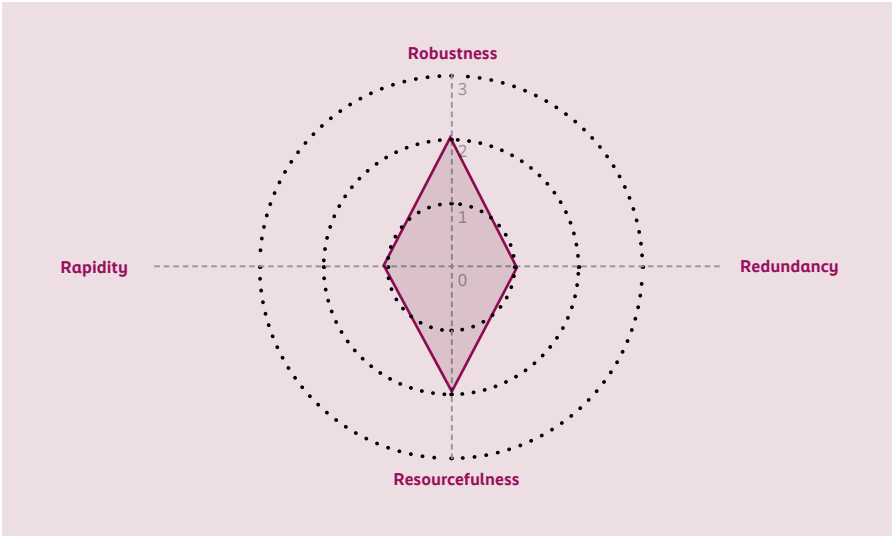

Figure 11: 4Rs Framework Assessment of the Employment Strategy 2024 - 2028. (Source: Own creation)

The Employment Strategy 2024–2028 was developed to address pressing labour market challenges. It promotes active policies aimed at mitigating negative trends in Kosovo, such as high youth unemployment, low women's participation in the labour market, and skills mismatches leading to unemployment. The strategy's overall resilience has been assessed at 50%.

The framework of the Employment Strategy 2024–2028 includes active labour market policies, supports skills training, youth programs, and fosters inter-ministerial cooperation. However, non-digital sectors remain insufficiently supported, resulting in moderate robustness - score 2. While the strategy offers institutional coordination, it lacks specific enforcement instruments and contingency plans for labour disruptions caused by automation. Redundancy is limited - score 1, as the strategy lacks backup or fallback mechanisms to address shifts caused by automation, particularly in traditional sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing, which are highly vulnerable in such crises.

The Employment Strategy 2024–2028 demonstrates support for resource mobilisation through a range of policies and programs, while also promoting inter-ministerial collaboration and reforms to strengthen the capacities and services of the Employment Agency. However, limited institutional capacity in non-digital sectors and slow decision-making processes constrain adaptability, resulting in a moderate resourcefulness score - score 2. While the structure allows for cooperation, it lacks mechanisms for innovation or emergency resource reallocation. Rapidity in this strategy is minimal - score 1, as policymakers have prioritised long-term employment objectives over establishing mechanisms for swift responses to automation-driven labour shortages. There are no emergency protocols or accelerated training options to respond rapidly to sudden job displacement, and review cycles are set on a long-term basis, not suitable for urgent intervention.

Discussing the findings

The 4R assessment of Kosovo's regulatory framework reveals that, when facing labour shocks such as job shortages caused by automation, the existing legislation, strategies, and projects demonstrate moderate resilience with an overall score of 51%. This score corresponds to a situation where the policies and regulations in place provide a reasonable level of preparedness and response, but some critical gaps remain. These findings point to a structurally weak and institutionally fragile framework, raising concerns about its capacity to effectively respond to sudden labour market disruptions and prevent potential employment crises.

Table 5: Total Score of Assessed Policies

#	Policy	Score	Max points
1	Law No.03/L –212 on Labour	2	
2	Law No. 04/L-138 for Vocational Education and Training	8	
3	Law NO. 04/L-205 on the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo	6	
4	Law No. 06/L-049 on Scientific Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology	8	
5	Law No. 08/L-208 on Industrial and Technological Parks	7	96
6	Kosovo Digital Economy (KODE) Project	6	
7	The National Development Strategy and Plan 2030	6	
8	The Employment Strategy 2024–2028	6	
Total		**49**	**51%**

Aside from the Law on Vocational Education and Training, which demonstrated high robustness, the remaining policies lacked sufficient strength to minimise the impact of shocks and maintain labour market stability. A very concerning issue pertaining to the Law on Labour, the main regulation on the matter, is its failure to address automation-induced shortages, currently one of the most pressing global labour market challenges. As the stock of robots increases across the EU and beyond, it is crucial to have legislation in place that regulates both the placement of such technologies in the workplace and the impact they will have on the workforce. In the cases when such technologies are used due to worker shortages, strategies on reorganisation of the workforce can help redistribute available workers where they are most needed. The current Labour Law exhibits very low robustness characteristics as it does not consider future shocks and challenges that can hit the labour

market. A similar situation was noticed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where companies and workers were faced with several economic challenges, workers were laid off, and no policies were in place to ensure their safety or re-integration in the labour market. The KODE project, on the other hand, along with the two assessed government strategies, reoriented their priorities toward the digital sector, which is positive in light of the current trends, yet a significant portion of the workforce outside the digital sector is left increasingly vulnerable to potential lay-offs.

In the cases when such technologies are used due to worker shortages, strategies on reorganisation of the workforce can help redistribute available workers where they are most needed.

The results of our assessment indicate that the redundancy of the regulatory framework is limited, as in most cases, no backup plan or alternative mechanism is provided in case the primary system fails. A major issue remains the lack of institutional support in the event of labour market displacement affecting the population. Here, institutional coordination is crucial to ensure such a hiccup can be overcome. Studies across the EU show that sector-specific strategies are crucial to facilitate the integration of automation in the workforce, while using it as a lever for employment. For example, the integration of service robots, particularly in sectors like healthcare, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, and infrastructure, has led to an increase in employment. While these robots necessitate operational technicians and maintenance personnel, they also considerably enhance productivity across various tasks.[31] In this case, complementing existing laws with mandatory guidelines and regulations tailored to workforce and labour market reorganisation could support both companies and workers in adapting to the new demands of the market.

Except for the Law on Labour, which does not mention support for innovation or engagement with futuristic industries, the rest of the framework shows moderate levels of resourcefulness, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and promoting institutional flexibility. The rest of the framework seems to follow EU best practices in dealing with labour shifts, including a higher emphasis on training, focusing on emerging technological sectors, etc. While automation can lead to new job opportunities, it is also important to note that such developments are new for firms as well, meaning that such business models are not yet as sustainable as traditional ones, hence potentially leading to less secure employment relationships. As such, it is crucial for policymakers to anticipate policy measures that can support businesses as well in this journey.[32] However, flexibility remains limited in non-digital sectors due to institutional capacity constraints and inefficient decision-making structures.

The assessed policies were initially designed as long-term strategies, focus-

ing on gradual reforms and sustained objectives. That said, the framework demonstrates minimal rapidity, primarily due to the absence of fast-track procedures and emergency protocols, both of which are essential for responding effectively to labour disruptions caused by automation. Additionally, it is worth noting that apart from the KODE project and the national strategies, the analysed laws have not undergone any relevant changes for years now, such as in the case of the Labour Law from 2010, making it difficult to be useful in an ever-changing labour environment.

Conclusions and recommendations

Building a resilient workforce against automation-induced shifts is a complex process. It requires both a mindset shift and a strong political will to develop effective response mechanisms to a challenge that is constantly evolving. The idea of automation in the labour market initially received a negative response and was associated with concerns over job losses and the replacement of human labour by machines. Across the EU, this served as a wake-up call toward different issues such as an ageing workforce, demographic shifts, workers migration, revision of education systems, vocational education programs, etc. In our region and Kosovo, automation is slowly making its presence in different sectors and industries. While there is no definitive answer whether automation is a negative or positive phenomenon, it is not reversible and will continue to expand its presence. In light of this, a shift is needed to ensure the potential of this tool is embraced and to use it to respond to identified socio-economic challenges. To do so, regulatory frameworks are the first pit-stop.

A long-term stressor, such as automation, requires long-term response interventions.

Based on our assessment, Kosovo's regulatory framework demonstrates very limited resilience, placing the population at risk, particularly given the disruptive nature of automation, which could trigger severe labour market and economic crises. While beyond the scope of this policy brief, such crises need to be researched through a gender lense as well. The disproportionate placement of women in the labour market in Kosovo will undoublty be impacted from such shifts. Therefore further research should aim to better understand how automation might intensify existing inequalities or create new opportunities for women's inclusion in the workforce.

Considering that Kosovo is also in the long journey of EU accession, where numerous reforms are being implemented to increase the convergence with the way the EU works, resilience in labour resilience is crucial to ensure Kosovo's companies, workers, and market generally can cope with the competitiveness that we find in the EU. Therefore, several policy proposals are outlined below to help mitigate the potential impacts of this shock.

The establishment of a public-private council to foster collaboration between the government, education providers, and businesses including chambers of commerce could prove beneficial, as one of the most commonly cited issues in labour market reports is the misalignment between the education system and the skills demanded by employers. The council would be tasked with updating curricula, forecasting future skills needs, and offering co-financed training programs, along with expanding work-based learning opportunities such as internships and apprenticeships, which remain limited in Kosovo. Such initiatives already exist in some forms around the country, through this council all these stakeholders would be able to channel their work and jointly contribute to a better management of the labour market dynamics in Kosovo.

Urgent re-activation of the Social Economic Council must be pursued as a means of strengthening social dialogue and increasing the cooperation between trade unions, employer associations and governmental ministries. This would facilitate more frequent exchanges on critical issues related to the labor market including emerging trends, rapid response to labour market shifts, etc. Across the EU, the strong cooperation between trade unions and employer associations has ensured the isolation of automation as a cause of unemployment, and has led to a new dynamic of using precisely this shock as a means to steer more employment opportunities. Such a cooperative approach must be followed from the region as well.

Effective labour market monitoring provides critical insights into the health and direction of an economy. By tracking these metrics, stakeholders can identify emerging trends, anticipate potential challenges, and formulate proactive strategies to ensure a dynamic and resilient labour force. For the government, this translates to informed policy decisions regarding education, training, and social welfare programs. As such the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers must expand its data collection scope beyond mere descriptive statistics on employer and job searchers, to include comprehensive real-time data on job vacancies across all sectors, detailed breakdowns of skill demand and supply, analysis of labour market flows including job creation and destruction or worker transitions, insights into the gig economy and non-standard employment, and granular data on wage differentials by industry, occupation, and region/municipality, etc.

Enhancing and further promoting the platform Superpuna and its component on training. Superpuna is a recent platform created by the Kosovo Government to facilitate young people access to the labour market and help companies find workers. In light of such dynamics in relation to the labour market, Superpuna's component on professional training can be tailored to offer training on skills required from the job market. A closer cooperation between the institutions administering the platform with businesses, professional schools, sectoral institutions, etc. could ensure the training programmes are adequate and in line with the demands of the market. Additionally a bigger promotion of the platform with secondary schools around the country, professional schools and universities could ensure opportunities promoted in this platform reach young workers across the country.

A joint unit on rapid response born out of the cooperation of the Employment Agency and the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, would serve toward targeted and immediate support in the case of significant, concentrated sectoral shifts or widespread job displacements. Concrete actions of this unit would include rapid reintegration job fairs specifically matching displaced workers with identified on-demand sectors, the provision of transitional income support linked to participation in reskilling programs, and the activisation of training centers in affected regions to address the immediate skill gaps for re-employment.

A long-term stressor, such as automation, requires long-term response interventions. Such a challenge is also influenced by political processes. Different political coalitions may choose different responses, however, it is crucial that such responses do not take a project-based approach, as their consequences will mainly be felt by workers themselves. The above-listed recommendations aim to build on existing initiatives to ensure we do not face policy accumulation and non-efficient use of resources, and suggest some new solutions through existing channels and stakeholders in place.

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TECHNOLOGICAL PARKS

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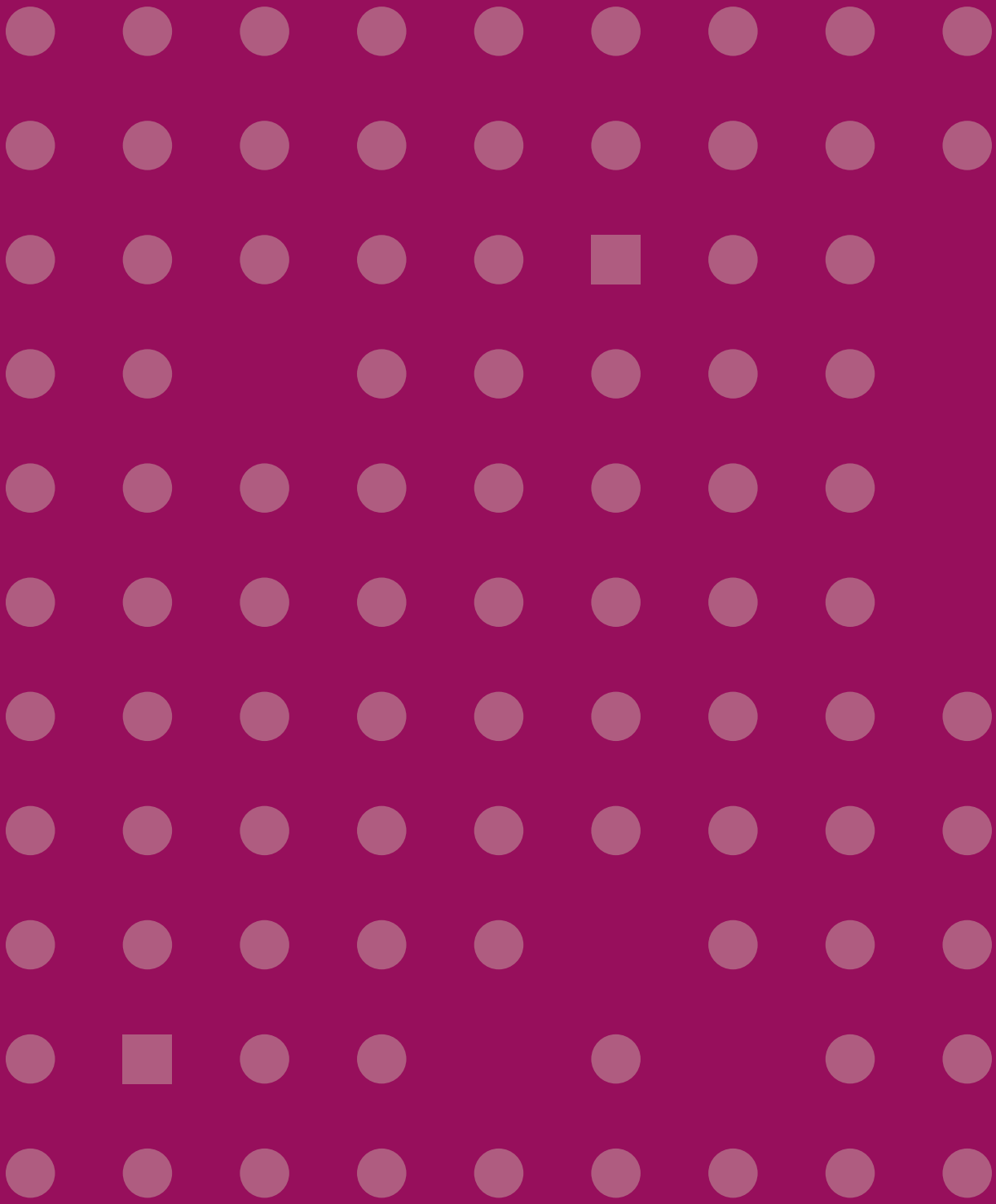

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