

KOSOVO RESOLVES DISPUTES VIA ONLINE MEDIATION

Kosovo entered a new phase of dispute resolution as a result of public health restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In mid-March 2020, Kosovo reduced its court services, limiting in-person hearings to only detention and domestic violence cases. Thousands of citizens with civil disputes continued to need case resolution but were left in limbo. With support from USAID's Commercial Justice activity, Kosovo courts began introducing online mediation as an alternative way to resolve disputes.

After finding a simple, reliable, and secure online platform, the Kosovo Judicial Council issued a decision directing the courts to start referring cases to online mediation. The mediation procedure is an extrajudicial but regulated procedure for resolution of disputes between the parties. Working with court presidents, clerks, and mediators, the USAID Commercial Justice team facilitated the referral of the first three cases to online mediation in May, each resulting in a settlement.

While courts are now reopening, online mediation remains as a viable option to resolve disputes. USAID support continues to help courts and mediators to facilitate and streamline the mediation referral process, including online mediation. By introducing a way of conducting mediation virtually, the Kosovo judicial system has opened the doors of opportunity for providing access to justice and economizing case resolution procedures. In addition, online mediation makes the resolution of cases more effective, cheaper, and time-saving, especially for cases when parties live outside Kosovo.