

Promises and realities of the (100) bygone days: An Assessment of Kurti II Government

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PROMISES AND REALITIES OF THE (100) BYGONE DAYS: AN ASSESSMENT OF KURTI II GOVERNMENT

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodology is used in this study by analyzing the 1) government program, 2) government documents, and 3) government decisions. Scoring is based on three parameters or variables: 1) Lëvizja Vetëvendosje electoral promises; 2) Citizen's expectations of the Government, and 3) Achievement of promises/program for the first 100 days of governing. The scoring below is between 1 (the lowest) and 10 (the highest) score.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Overall performance: the Kurti's II Government 5.5 points (ppt) out of 10 in the overall performance indicator for the first 100 days. This rating is measured on those indicators such as election campaign's promises and governing program, as well as their implementation. Considering the transformative narrative of Kurti II with a look at the expectations of the citizens on the one hand, and the fulfillment of policies from health to foreign policy on the other hand, one may conclude that the general performance has been mediocre.

Integrity: Government integrity's rate is 8 ppt. Integrity is measured by the professionalism of the cabinet and- the absence of politicians' involvement in corrupt affairs, coupled with the lack of criminal precedents and running judicial proceedings.

Planning and Coordination: Planning and coordination present many setbacks and there is the need for improvement. The work of the Government in this sector is ranked with 4 ppt, with the governing program being voted about two months after taking office only. Also, the program is very broad and without a precise definition of transformative aspects. In addition, the operational work plan, setting clear deadlines and objectives for the implementation of the program, is absent. The legislative agenda, although ambitious, has undergone constant changes, thus, revealing the lack of a proper planning.

Overall transparency: Overall transparency has been ranked with 6.5 ppt, by measuring the transparency in relation to the public, with a look at the decisions taken by the government, as well as by the transparency of the Prime Minister's Office (OPM). The latter has marked a low rating due to closure to the public, media, and civil society in many respects

Human capacity: Human capacity has been ranked with 3 ppt reporting a significant deficit for not hiring key professional and political staff in the cabinet of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers and in general in the ministerial cabinets. A proper monitoring, from the Office of the Prime Minister to every ministry, reports a lack of cabinet's completion. More problematic is that these institutions have not shown transparency in making the appointment of employed staff accessible to the public in this period.

INTRODUCTION

The Kurti II's Government took office on the 22nd of March 2021. Vetëvendosje established a pre-coalition agreement with Lista GUXO, led by Vjosa Osmani, a month before the Election Day. The duo won a historic 50.28% of the overall vote in Kosovo. The ruling coalition has a majority of 67 out of 120 seats in the parliament.

The government consists of 15 Ministries, with over 25 Deputy Ministers appointed so far, and it is the smallest Government in post-independent Kosovo. For the first time, following independence, the Government does not include the war-wing parties in executive positions. Also, given the new political landscape in Kosovo, the Kurti II's Government may mark a new political chapter for the country. In fact, relying on a legitimacy of its citizens, the expectations towards Kurti II are higher considering that for most of its political existence Vetëvendosje was an opposition party advocating for transformative changes. In this respect, the current Government carries a heavy burden, in order to accomplish the promises made throughout the years, and especially in the last electoral campaign.

Inevitably, COVID-19 and other complex issues such as the Dialogue with Serbia and the legislative dominated these first 100 days of Kurti II. Hence, the purpose of this policy analysis is to provide an assessment of this governing period and to evaluate its performance in several policy fields: COVID-19's management, economic recovery, rule of law, public administration reform (PAR), electoral reform, reform in the education system, the unrealistic legislative agenda, foreign policy, the Dialogue with Serbia, the European integration process and environmental issues.

I. OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

The Office of Prime Minister (OPM) has shown a relatively closed approach towards the media and the general public in its first 100 days in office. In this respect, the Prime Minister Kurti did not hold a single press conference for 45 days in power, and in many occasions, he was hesitant to answer the journalists at public events. Moreover, Kurti was not present in any political debate to confer about its government program, foreign policy objectives or any other crucial issue for the country in this first quarter. This stance of the OPM contradicts what Vetëvendosje proclaimed in the past, and a shift change can be noted from the first 52 days of Kurti II's Government. In reference to that, the OPM and the Prime Minister specifically, did not show a major cooperation with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) concerning participation in events, meetings or consultations on certain issues. However, a decentralized communication between the CSOs and certain ministries existed, and it is maintained. Yet, it does not fulfill the urgency for a more direct communication with the OPM in regard to crucial problems Kosovo still faces.

Overall, the communication of the OPM was limited to the general public, the media and civil society. The channeled and decentralized communication is welcomed, however, the OPM's more transparency and presence is needed at all levels in order to ensure accountability. In short, the 100 days of the OPM do not reflect a transformative approach.

II. THE BUMPY ROAD OF COVID-19 MANAGEMENT

Kosovo has been severely challenged by the COVID-19's crisis management. When the Kurti's Government took office on the 22nd of March, 16 deaths were registered along with 827 new

infections out of 5.049 testing samples.¹ The first week of Kurti II was accompanied with high infection rates, and a critical situation at Kosovo's hospitals, reaching the crucial point where no single bed was available for the upcoming infected patients in the Infectious Disease Clinic.² Crisis administration became more problematic bearing in mind that Kosovo has been the last country in the Balkans securing vaccines against COVID-19. Changes in power amidst the pandemic generated many problems in terms of crisis management, often unveiling a ping-pong game between the former Health Minister from LDK, Armend Zemaj, and the current one Arben Vitija, especially about the immunization process. Ambiguity characterized the first two months of the Kurti's Government in relation to the COVID-19's management. The lack of a clear operational plan and a strategy was evidential as the situation worsened, and the Government's response was not adequate to the existing conditions.

Amidst the so-called second wave of high infection rate with COVID-19, a first contingent of vaccines landed in Kosovo on the 28th of March 2021.³ Finally, there was a light at the end of the tunnel, with [24.000 dozes of vaccines arriving in the country](#). The first contingent was provided by UNICEF through the COVAX mechanism. Yet, the number of vaccines was insufficient both for the size of the population of Kosovo, as well as for the current health situation. Conversely, uncertainty followed, as the Kurti's Government neither provided assurance nor secured contracts with producers and companies for more vaccines. Under these circumstances, the capacities of the health-care institutions have been exhausted due to the high number of cases in the clinics. During the peak of infections, the health personnel has been lacking the basic tools to treat the infected patients. Although the pandemic has unveiled Kosovo's health system major disruptions, it is now up to the Kurti's Government to restructure this public sector in a consistent way.

To this end, on April 7th the Government decided on the new restrictive measures in response to the health crisis posed by the high number of infections. From 7th to 18th of April the freedom of movement for citizens was prohibited from 22:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. except in emergency cases. Events such as conferences, excursions, and other indoor activities were strictly forbidden as well.⁴ The decision to implement the curfew faced objections and criticism from the gastronomy and other business sectors. Nonetheless, the new measures were implemented as agreed by the Ministry of Health.

During the months of March and April of the current year low number of tests were carried out, by causing more ambiguity about the actual infection rate. The Kurti's Government failed to provide mass testing for the wider population. The excuse of the Ministry of Health was that the month of Ramadan dropped the requests for testing.⁵ This, however, is to be looked at as an immature declaration considering the high number of active cases with COVID-19 during

¹ "16 deaths from coronavirus in Kosovo in the last 24 hours", Koha.net (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/263493/16-te-vdekur-nga-koronavirusi-ne-kosove-gjate-24-oreve-te-fundit/> [Accessed 5 April 2021].

² "There are no free beds in Infectious Diseases, new measures are required", Kallxo.com (2021). Available at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/nuk-ka-shtreter-te-lire-ne-infektive-kerkohen-masa-te-reja/> [Accessed 10 April 2021].

³ "The first doses of COVID-19 vaccine arrive in Kosovo through COVAX", Ministry of Health (2021). Available at: <https://msh.rks-gov.net/sq/arrijne-ne-kosove-dozat-e-para-te-vaksines-kunder-covid-19-permes-covax/> [Accessed 5 April 2021].

⁴ "Decision of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo on new anti-COVID measures 19", Ministry of Health (2021). Available at: <https://msh.rks-gov.net/sq/vendimi-i-qeverise-se-republikes-se-kosoves-per-masat-e-reja-anti-covid-19/> [Accessed 6 April 2021].

⁵ "Ramadan month reduces the number of tests for coronavirus", Radio Free Europe (2021). Available at: <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/ramazani-teste-koronavirus-/31225826.html> [Accessed 20 April 2021].

these months. The distribution of tests across Kosovo, including rural areas, should have been an immediate measure to be undertaken by the Government. Yet, that did not occur, and a promotional campaign for testing lacked. In addition to that, the bureaucratic procedures to be tested rendered the overall process uneven. Hence, despite the decrease in the number of infections countrywide, the Kurti II's Government should provide COVID-19's tests simultaneously with vaccines as well as other health-related equipment. In doing so, an immediate action is needed to identify the new variants of COVID-19 across the country, by providing *ad hoc* mechanisms for their proper detection or sending the samples for analysis abroad.

Given the critical situation with COVID-19, the vaccination process started on April 8th and the first beneficiaries were citizens 85 years old and upward, as well as those with chronic diseases.⁶ The process of vaccination for the first category took place in Pristina and in major municipalities. On the whole the organization of the first phase went smoothly with no major disruptions. Albeit the infection rate was high during April, the Kurti's II Government decided to ease, on the 19th of that month, the restricted measures gradually. For instance, the activity of the shopping centers has been allowed according to the relevant governmental instructions, the gastronomy services have been enabled to conduct their activities, and the dormitories opened. However, the restriction of movement was yet in place from 22:30 p.m. to 05:00 a.m., in emergency cases.⁷ While the number of infections remained high, the number of patients at Kosovo's clinics started to downsize. Despite this, the majority of the clinics were still overwhelmed, while disclosing the limited capacities of the health-care personnel. This scenario reinforces the ultimate necessity for more planning and investment in the health-care sector. Hence, no strategy has been presented by the Kurti's Government in this first quarter about the 'gain brain' of the health-care personnel. COVID-19 has, in fact, shed light on the need of a strategic planning in multifold dimensions with a view at upgrading the overall health-care system.

Furthermore, by the beginning of May the curb of infections started to decline significantly on a daily basis. New doses of vaccines (4.680) arrived on the 4th of May, even though they were still not sufficient for the population's needs. However, another 38.400 doses of vaccines arrived on the 12th of May in Pristina as part of the COVAX initiative.⁸ Conversely, a glimpse of hope was seen in the horizon with the number of cases lowering down and more vaccines' deliveries. Yet, a major mismanagement occurred with the vaccination process of the over 65 year old group, a day after thousands of vaccines arrived. The invitation of the Ministry of Health without a clear plan and schedule of vaccination of this age group caused long queues and gatherings directly endangering the public.⁹ Given that situation, a coalition of CSOs called upon the Government to decentralize the vaccination and provide proper information and

⁶ "Vaccination of persons over the age of 85 begins", Koha.net (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/265808/sot-nis-vaksinimi-i-qytetareve-mbi-85-vjec/> [Accessed 15 May 2021]

⁷ "New Anti-COVID measures", Ministry of Health (2021). Available at: <https://msh.rks-gov.net/sq/masat-e-reja-anti-covid-19/> []

⁸ "The next contingent from COVAX arrives with 38,400 vaccines, in total 62,400 doses!", Ministry of Health (2021). Available at: <https://msh.rks-gov.net/sq/mberrin-kontigjenti-i-radhes-nga-covax-me-38-400-vaksina-ne-total-62-400-doza/> [Accessed 30 May 2021]

⁹ "CSOs call on Government: Decentralize vaccination in big cities", Koha.net (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/270947/oshc-te-thirrje-qeverise-decentralizoni-vaksinimin-ne-qytetet-e-medha/> [Accessed 15 May 2021]

Planning. Consequently, a prompt reaction by the Ministry of Health followed, with this firing the Vaccination Committee due to mismanagement in the organizational process.¹⁰

Nonetheless, according to recent data, Kosovo remains the last country to be vaccinated in the region and is one of the least vaccinated worldwide heading Namibia and Tajikistan only. Serbia leads the group significantly with 3.6 million vaccinations, followed by Albania (600 thousand) Montenegro (about 110 thousand), and Northern Macedonia (84 thousand). By contrast, Kosovo has carried out only 28 thousand vaccinations so far, as per the last available data (10th of May).¹¹ However, the progress has been made in securing and administering vaccines by the end of May and the mid of June with a low number of cases being registered in these two months. Albeit Kosovo lags behind its neighbors, a comparison between mid-May and mid-June shows a significant positive change in regard to the vaccine's management.

Botswana	142 864						
Seychelles	137 196						
Madagascar	136 785						
Suriname	120 155						
Aruba	118 327						
Jersey	114 615						
Kosovo	102 598						
Namibia	102 549						
Tajikistan	97 290						

Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1194934/number-of-covid-vaccine-doses-administered-by-county-worldwide/> (Last Accessed 20 June 2021).

On the 28th of May the Ministry of Health announced that Kosovo expects to receive 1.213.290 doses of Pfizer Coronavirus vaccine by the end of the year, because of the low number of infections registered during May and June, the Government decided to lift the curfew and ease other measures for the business sector.¹² Its COVID-19 management showed a positive change from May onwards. Concretely, the number of infections was put under control and vaccines' deliveries, if compared with those of the 29th of March, changed drastically in a positive manner.

¹⁰ "The members of the Vaccination Committee are fired due to the commotion on Friday" Koha.net (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/271573/shkarkohen-anetaret-e-komitetit-per-vaksinim-shkaku-i-tollovise-te-se-premtes/> [Accessed 17 May 2021]

¹¹ "Kosovo at the bottom of the list, neighboring countries many times more vaccinated" Koha.net (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/270438/kosova-ne-fund-te-listes-vendet-fqinje-shumefish-me-shume-te-vaksinuar/> [Accessed 16 June 2021]

¹² Ibid.

	COVAX	EU	World Bank	Total
March	24.000 (29 March)	0	0	24.0000
April	0	0	0	0
May	38.400 (12 May) 100.620 (27 May) Government contract for 1.213.290 until the end of 2021.	4.680 (7 May) Austrian Embassy	10.000 Donation from Croatia	152.870
				176.870

(Source: Ministry of Health, June 2021).

Thus, with a considerable number of vaccines in place the Ministry of Health launched, on the 15th of June, the mass vaccination process across the country.¹³In order to ensure its smooth running the Ministry, in cooperation with the municipalities, has created new vaccination facilities; has increased human capacity by establishing 279 vaccination teams nationwide (from 89 so far); and it has set up the necessary infrastructure.¹⁴Hence, as of the 15th of June 100.00 citizens have been vaccinated. However, Kosovo needs a more intensified process of mass vaccination to level up with the Western Balkans countries and to reach the vaccination of 60% of the population by the end of 2021. For this to occur, a strict management of the immunization plan should occur with a special emphasis on securing the vaccines as per the plan itself.

However, with the provision of a greater number of vaccines and additional measures, the Kurti II's Government has made a solid progress in managing the pandemic. But the situation remains a concern with Kosovo still ranking last in the region in terms of vaccinated population. This scenario is largely to be attributed to the initial delays in providing vaccines and the low tempo in terms of their distribution, along with the mismanagement of the immunization process in the first stage, all of them still showing their negative effects up today. Nonetheless, the improved conditions in the fight against COVID-19 are tangible compared to the first days when the Kurti II took office.

Overall, the Kurti's II Government should focus on the health-care system's reforms. Consequently, it is decisive to properly amend the 2014 Law on Health Insurance, finalize the Health Insurance Fund's draft with all relevant services, and provide health insurance to the citizens of Kosovo by 2021.¹⁵ In addition to that, a continuous investment in health-care capacities by further decentralizing medical services is needed. It is of crucial importance for the Government to modernize health-care services and make the health information system operational in the long-term. Precisely, it should assess the current capacities, and provide the budgetary means to ensure a constant improvement of the healthcare services, whether through

¹³ "Minister Vitia: Mass vaccination against COVID-19, a vital process for our country" Ministry of Health (2021). Available at: <https://msh.rks-gov.net/sq/ministri-vitia-vaksinimi-masiv-kunder-covid-19-process-jetik-per-vendin-tone/> [Accessed 15 June 2021].

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Pillars of a Visionary Plan: Some of the key priorities for Kurti II Government" GLPS (2021). Available at: http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Policy-Note_NjA-RrH_Government-Priorities.pdf [Accessed 5 June 2021].

an innovative medical equipment or even digitalization, wherever possible.¹⁶ Also, it should strive for accession to the World Health Organization (WHO). Evidently, the COVID-19's management should remain the highest priority for the Government. Yet, a targeted planning and concrete actions shall be undertaken accordingly in the health system for the upcoming months.

III. BIG PROMISES, LITTLE RESULTS: ECONOMIC RECOVERY

The Kurti's II Government Program ranks economic recovery as a second priority. A series of measures are foreseen especially for curbing the COVID-19's impact on the economy. One of the first Government's moves was the subsidizing workers' salaries and rent for businesses, being affected by the decision to suspend their activity for 12 days from the 7th to the 18th April.¹⁷ The Government has, therefore, approved a budget allocation of 6 Mill Euros from the economic recovery program. The payment of the subsidy is made up to 50% of the net salary for the workers in the gastronomy, and for those in the intra-urban transport sector. The rent subsidy is made at the level of 50% net up to a maximum of 2.500 Euros.¹⁸ Another 5.2 Mill Euros additional funds have been allocated for the payment of health and security sector allowances, thus, reaching a total of 11 Mill Euros for the private and public sector. A positive aspect of this package is that the beneficiaries were well categorized. To be said otherwise, it did not include businesses, as per the Hoti government's measures, which were not heavily affected by the pandemic. However, the disbursement of the subsidies did not occur until the 16th of June due to the selection process of the beneficiaries.¹⁹

In the meantime, the Government led by Albin Kurti has not started distributing funds from the Law on Economic Recovery to businesses suffering losses from COVID-19 yet.²⁰ This is a major shortcoming considering the severe economic situation posed by the pandemic. The delays to amend and implement the Law and its related packages further unveil the Government's mismanagement about the economic challenges facing the country. Therefore, the Kurti's II Government shall take and develop immediate measures in order to tackle the impact of COVID-19 on the economy. Also, it shall draft policies to generate sustainable development apart from the immediate and emergent measures posed by the pandemic.

In fact, the Government's program has been approved approximately two months after Prime Minister Albin Kurti took office. But the economic recovery section is very broad and without a precise definition. Consequently, most of the targets have not been completed in this quarter of the year. Therefore, the Government is urged to set clear deadlines and objectives. One of the first measures foreseen in the Government program was the raise of the minimum wage up to 250 Euros for 40 hours work a week. This, however, has neither been pushed forward nor implemented yet.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "The government will subsidize the businesses affected by the measures; the amount is unknown" Koha.net (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/video/265757/qeveria-do-ti-subvencionoje-bizneset-e-prekura-nga-masat-shuma-nuk-dihet/> [Accessed 10 May 2021].

¹⁸ "Government Decision No.01/08," Government of Kosovo (2021) Available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Vendimet-e-Mbledhjes-se-8-te-te-Qeverise-se-Republikes-se-Kosoves....pdf> [Accessed 30 May 2021]

¹⁹ "Subsidizing salaries and rent, a commission for reviewing complaints is established" Kosova Press (2021). Available at: <https://kosovapress.com/subvencionimi-i-pagave-dhe-qirase-themelohet-komisioni-per-shqyrtimin-e-ankesave/> [Accessed 12 June 2021].

²⁰ "Recovery plan, after emergency ", Radio Free Europe (2021). Available at: <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/moszbati-i-ligjit-per-rimekembje-/31214890.html> [Accessed 5 June 2021].

A courageous initiative of the Kurti's Government was the Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing the Law on Vehicles, providing for the abolition of homologation for the vehicles (i.e., cars, trucks etc.) imported from the EU, Switzerland and Norway.²¹ Furthermore, in order to secure a better performance the Kurti's II Government dismissed the boards of public enterprises such as the Kosovo Energy Corporation, Kosovo's Telecom and Kosovo's Railways INFRACOS, which were appointed by the former Prime Minister Hoti.²² However, no major achievement has been met in this quarter by the abovementioned public companies. Critics accused the Government of political appointments in managerial positions such as the financial director of Telecom. On the whole, public enterprises' full restructuring shall remain a high priority for the Kurti's Government.

Recently, the Government of Kosovo has issued Decision 19/16, dated 22.06.2021, on the abolition of the border insurance premium or as it is known the "Green Card", a service that will be fully covered by the Government of Kosovo for foreigners coming to Kosovo by the end of 2021. The decision was strongly opposed by several civil society organizations, fearing that the Kosovo's budget is filled with money of poor taxpayers and used to cover expenses for private vehicles.²³

The meager performance of the Government in the first quarter leaves much room for improvement with a look at the economic recovery. In fact, no major action has been undertaken for the economy in general, and for the private sector in particular in this period. A concerning aspect was the absence of clear-cut measures targeting the business sector. Thus, it is crucial for the Kurti's Government to present the amended Economic Recovery Package and implement it as soon as possible. Fight against economic informality should be prioritized by the Government taking into account a concerning increase of this phenomenon during COVID-19. Identifying and strengthening strategic sectors, restructuring public enterprises, and designing as well as implementing ad hoc plans to attract foreign direct investments (FDIs) remain some of the key pillars for the Government to undertake in the next months and years.

IV. RULE OF LAW: REFORMING OF REBRANDING?

The Kurti II's Government has made vast promises in the field of the rule of law, with the population having great expectations in this field. In fact, Vetëvendosje won the majority of the votes in the last elections due to its continuous promises regarding substantial reforms in the rule of law sector. Its stance is a response to the deep-rooted systemic corruption in Kosovo and citizens' dissatisfaction with the old regime. Hence, due to the years of persistent opposition and promises for the betterment of the sector, a step backward will be a negative indicator for the citizens' assessment of this Government.

Vetting

One of the most popular electoral promises of Vetëvendosje has continuously been the vetting reform in the rule of law sector. In the first 100 days of the Kurti's II Government, several steps

²¹ "The abolition of vehicle homologation is voted in the Assembly of Kosovo", Albanian Post (2021). Available at: <https://albanianpost.com/votohet-heqja-e-homologimit-te-automjeteve-ne-kuvendin-e-kosoves/> [Accessed 21 June 2021].

²² "Government Decisions No.01/12" Government of Kosovo (2021). Available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Vendimet-e-Mbledhjes-se-12-te-te-Qeverise-se-Republikes-se-Kosoves....pdf>

²³ 'Civil society against the decision to cover border security for the diaspora', (Koha.net). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/276980/shoqeria-civile-kunder-vendimit-per-mbulimin-e-sigurimit-kufitar-per-diasporen/> [Accessed 23 June 2021]

have been taken to initiate the reform. A vetting group has been created, and it is composed of representatives of relevant institutions as well as of the civil society. Specifically, the degree of representation of the civil society in this process is reported to be satisfactory.²⁴ Nevertheless, the composition of the representatives from the relevant institutions that are part of the vetting group is doubtful. In fact, the members of the vetting group should be experts in this field, or individuals who have studied such processes in different countries abroad. But, the current composition does not reflect the required expertise.

The civil society has advocated for a vetting reform via constitutional changes for years now. Similarly, it has been argued that in order to have a reform that reviews the fundamental aspects of integrity of judges and prosecutors, and dismisses those incompatible with their status, the vetting mechanism should be established through a constitutional amendment.²⁵ And, if the Government is going to undertake this process through legislative changes only, it is highly doubtful that the desired results will be achieved. At the same time, according to many declarations of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the option to establish the vetting mechanism through the existing constitutional rules is on the table.²⁶ This undoubtedly presents a potential clashing point between the civil society and the Government.

With a look at the categories of personnel who should undergo the vetting, whether a comprehensive vetting process in all rule of law institutions was pledged, currently the plan has taken initiatives for judges, prosecutors and their professional staff only. If other institutions, falling under the rule of law sector, will be excluded from the verification pertaining to the vetting mechanism, the reform will be partial and will fail to address the sector's systematic problems²⁷.

Therefore, the Kurti II's Government efforts should be reconsidered in terms of the way the vetting mechanism is set up, and the categories of personnel undergoing the vetting procedure itself.²⁸ Also, the evaluation process should be based on three key components such as: asset assessment, background assessment, and proficiency assessment. Furthermore, for a vetting mechanism to be professional and free from malpractices and politicization the first instance commission and second instance commission should be set up. As for Albania, both commissions must be monitored by international officials from EU Member States. The institutions' personnel should, in turn, be selected according to clearly defined criteria by law, which will guarantee objectivity and impartiality. They should have no ties to political parties or organized crime, and should be of proven professional integrity, ethics, and public trust. It is important to ensure that Kosovo creates a sustainable institutional mechanism able to allow enforcement bodies to be professional and independent.

Law on confiscation of unjustifiable assets

A long-standing promise of Vetëvendosje Movement on its anti-corruption initiative was adoption of the law on confiscation of unjustifiable property. In this regard, the Kurti's II

²⁴ "The working group for vetting in the justice system is formalized", KOHA (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/268565/formalizohet-grupi-punues-per-vetting-ne-sistemin-e-drejtise/> [Accessed 27 April 2021]

²⁵ For more please read: "Five integral question about the Vetting Process", GLPS (2021). Available at: <http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/five-integral-questions-about-the-vetting-process/>

²⁶ "Roundtable discussion with the Minister of Justice", GLPS (2021). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/GLPSKosovo/videos/468330277716437> [Accessed 21 April 2021]

²⁷ For more please read: "Five integral question about the Vetting Process", GLPS (2021). Available at: <http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/five-integral-questions-about-the-vetting-process/>

²⁸ *ibid.*

Government has approved a concept paper and efforts have begun on drafting a law for this purpose.²⁹

The concept paper regarding the casualties and technicalities of the law is in its initial phases. It mainly addresses the complexity of unjustifiable wealth problems and the failure of institutions to enforce rules that would combat this phenomenon. Also, it focuses on a comparative analysis of other states that have gone through the same process. So far, two meetings of the working group composed by relevant state institutions and experts from the civil society have been held. Within the working group, there is still a lot of uncertainty on how to proceed further. While the MoJ has the responsibility and leadership role in this process and it insists on initially drafting a legal text, civil society representatives, including the GLPS, are of the opinion that the main issues should be discussed first with the legal text being drafted afterwards.

GLPS reiterates that the draft law should not be limited to officials or politically exposed individuals and their respective relatives only, but to all citizens having unjustifiable assets. Reporting bodies and procedures should be well defined taking into account the protection of human rights and freedoms throughout the whole process. Concretely, a mechanism setting *ad hoc* criteria for proving unjustifiable assets should be set up. A pre-assessment procedure for requests validating the unjustifiability of assets in court, so that they are first examined once they are effectively grounded, thus, following the course pertaining to the confirmation of indictments in criminal proceedings, should be established.

Commercial Court

The MoJ re-presented the idea of establishing a separate commercial court, with specific jurisdiction in the field of business and commercial law,³⁰ in the first 100 days of the Kurti II's Government. But the current problems in the justice system are not solved with the establishment of a new organizational unit, such as the commercial court; rather it is required to intervene on the substance of the problem and not just on its form.

To be said otherwise, the core reason behind the dysfunction of the justice system is human behavior, not structure, laws or procedures. The same is valid for the commercial justice, where there is a lack of professionalism, which needs to be urgently addressed. For this purpose, *ad hoc* professional training and development should be provided. Concretely, the training curricula of the Academy of Justice must be updated to increase the professionalism of judges serving in the department for commercial concerns. Also, the Law on Court should be changed with a look at the competencies of the President of the Basic Court in Pristina. A head of department for commercial concerns could be assigned within this Basic Court. He/she would have the same competencies as the President of the Court within the department for commercial concerns. This restructuring would enable a proper representation in front of the President of the Court and of the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC).

Along with the need of addressing the lack of professionalism mentioned above, the draft law on the Commercial Court is very ambitious and, most importantly, it is in violation of international and constitutional principles, what, in fact, could hinder its own implementation.

²⁹ "Concept Paper on the Issue of Unjustifiably Acquired assets", PM Office (2021). Available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Koncept-Dokumenti-per-Ceshtjen-e-Pasurise-se-fituar-ne-menyre-te-Pajusti...-converted-1.pdf>

³⁰ "Ministry of Justice delivers to the Government the draft law on the establishment of the Commercial Court", Kallxo.com (2021). Available at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/ministria-e-drejtise-dergon-ne-qeveri-projektligjin-per-themelimin-e-gjykates-komerciale/> [Accessed 21 June 2021]

V. LONG AWAITED REFORMS

Public Administration Reform

The Public administration reform (PAR) is stalled as per the previous Hoti Government. Yet, the recent appointment of a deputy minister by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) to be directly responsible, among other duties, for the Public Administration Reform (PAR) is to be welcomed.³¹

At the same time, the Law on Organization and Functioning of State Administration (LOFSA)³² and the Law on Public Officials (LPO)³³, being part of a package of a radical legislative reform two years ago, have not been implemented yet. In its 100 days in office the Kurti's II Government has not undertaken tangible steps for boosting the public administration legislation which, however, is a key milestone for speeding up the country's EU integration process. Also, the downsizing of the number of ministries has not started yet, with the administrative structures still functioning as before.³⁴

A Council of Minister for Public Administration Reform was established and held a meeting during this period. In addition, the Special Group for Public Administration Reform, a joint structure between the EU and Kosovo, also held regular meetings and joint conclusions were drawn about the public administration reform process.³⁵ Some measures have been made regarding the reform of agencies' rationalization. The law has been finalized on the first round at the technical level, but it has not been approved by the Government yet. Work has also begun on the agencies' rationalization, but the process is on hold while its finalization is expected by the end of 2021, according to LOFSA.

Another major issue of concern for this Government as well as for its predecessors is the doubtful appointment of certain people in key positions in core institutions. For instance, the appointment of the Commissioner for Information and Privacy has aroused great reactions from both the opposition and civil society.³⁶ The process showed irregularities in the evaluation of the professional and educational background of the potential selected candidate. Concern also rose about the composition of the interviewing panel.

Following the proposal of Vetevendosje Movement, the panel included all members of the Commission and not just one representative of political parties, as per the parliamentary practice so far. Civil society organizations, considering that the process was already at an advanced stage for properly addressing the concerns of a merit-based selection, called on the deputies to re-start the competition, so that the Commissioner could be selected following a fair and transparent selection procedure.

After several calls from the civil society, the commissioner was elected in the parliamentary session held in June 2021. A candidate, twice recommended by experts hired by

³¹ "Dobra is appointed as deputy Minister of MIA", MIA (2021). Available at: <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/57/595/Bardhyl-Dobra-emerohet-zevendesminister-i-Puneve-te-Brendshme-->

³² Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=18684> [Law no. 06/L-113, Accessed : 21 June 2021]

³³ Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=25839> [ibidem]

³⁴ Although officially the reduction of ministries is on paper, by merging several ministries, the administrative structures of the relevant departments of ministries have not properly systemized the civil servants.

³⁵ Decision nr.04/09, PM Office (2021). Available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Vendimet-e-Mbledhjes-se-9-te-Qeverise-se-Republikes-se-Kosoves.pdf> [Accessed 22 June 2021]

³⁶ "Election process of the Commissioner for Information and Privacy needs to be restarted", KosovaPress (2021). Available at: <https://kosovapress.com/kerkohet-qe-te-deshtojte-zgjedhja-e-komisionarit-per-informim-dhe-privatesi/> [Accessed 25 June]

the British Embassy for recruitment to senior positions, was elected.³⁷ Despite the positive news for electing a professional for such a crucial position, the boycott of the opposition regarding this process in the parliamentary sessions is alarming. In fact, deputies have a constitutional obligation to remain at the parliamentary sessions and vote on such important issues.

The Kurti's II Government should follow an inclusive approach combined with the required level of **political will** and **professionalism**, by focusing more on the implementation of legislation and strategies, and by prioritizing the process of the public administration reform.

Electoral Reform

Electoral reform in Kosovo started in 2011. It requires a resilient political will, and more importantly, it needs a political consensus; two elements that were absent over the years. The Kurti's II Government, assured, among the main promises of its electoral campaign, that it would initiate a process for an electoral reform in Kosovo, in order to address the problems that arise due to the ambiguities in the electoral laws and regulations, as well as to ensure a financial transparency of political parties.

However, the electoral reform is not intended, as per the legislative agenda of 2021,³⁸ to properly address, among others, key issues such as candidate certification, voter list's clearance, deadlines, electoral thresholds, deadlines for holding early elections or extraordinary ones. In the meantime, the draft laws on the financing of political parties, as well as the draft law on local elections have been placed on the legislative agenda.³⁹ Moreover, whether addressing these laws is a necessity, the electoral reform must be initiated by tackling all the key problematic issues mentioned above. Failure to do so would result in citizens losing their trust in the electoral process, while undermining democracy.

Reform in the Education Sector

The COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the great damage it has caused to the health-care sector and the economy has also impacted on the education system in a significant way. The latter has been entirely functioning online for a long period, while a gradual transition to traditional classes occurred in the recent months only. The Kurti's II Government program, lists a set of priorities, such as the transformation in preschool education, new textbooks, vocational education, scholarship system, free higher education and the establishment of a fund for scientific research.⁴⁰ But these ambitious priorities have neither a timeline nor a proper strategy. In its 100 days in office the Kurti's II Government has not undertaken the necessary steps for starting the implementation of its ambitious priorities abovementioned.

However, GLPS reiterates that a profound reform is much needed in the education sector. Concretely, *ad hoc* initiatives such as the transformation of regional universities, the strengthening of vocational schools and vocational training, the adoption of the new law on higher education, re-membership in the European association for quality assurance in higher education (ENCA) and increasing the budget for the education sector should be carefully

³⁷ "Krenare Sogojeva-Dermaku zgjidhet komisionere e Agjencise per Informim dhe Privatesi", Kallxo.com(2021). Available at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/krenare-sogojeva-dermaku-zgjidhet-komisionere-e-agjencise-per-informim-dhe-privatesi/> [Accessed 25 June]

³⁸ PM Office, (2021). Available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Programi-Legjislativ-per-vitin-2021.pdf>.

³⁹ Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, (2021). Available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Programi-Legjislativ-per-vitin-2021.pdf>

⁴⁰ Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2021). Available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Programi-i-Qeverise-se-Kosoves-2021-2025.pdf>

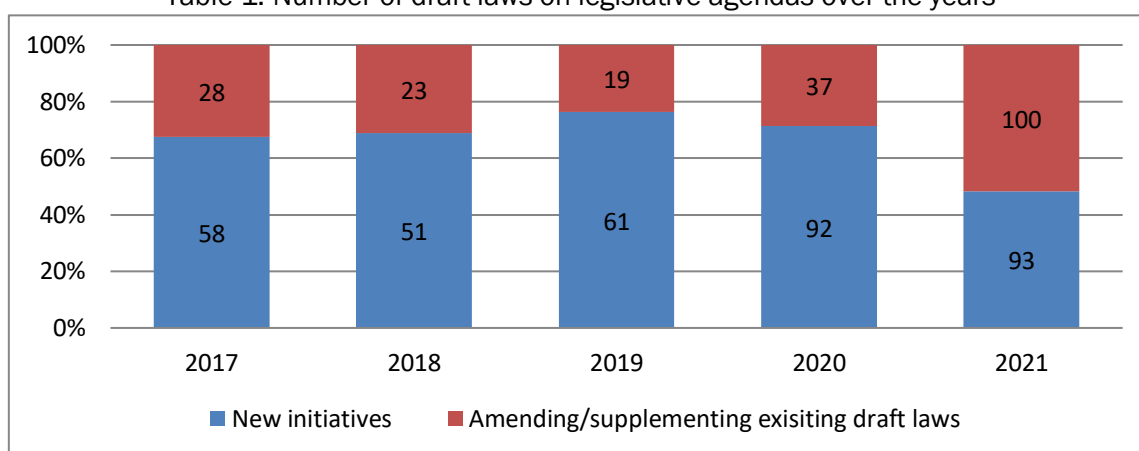
implemented. Whether 100 days is a too short time-frame for achieving tangible results in the education sector in the practice, the implementation of the abovementioned initiatives is crucial.

VI. UNREALISTIC LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

On its 45th day of governing, the Kurti's II cabinet approved the Legislative Agenda.⁴¹ Advocating change and reformation processes, it contains 93 draft laws that are expected to be adopted by the end of 2021.

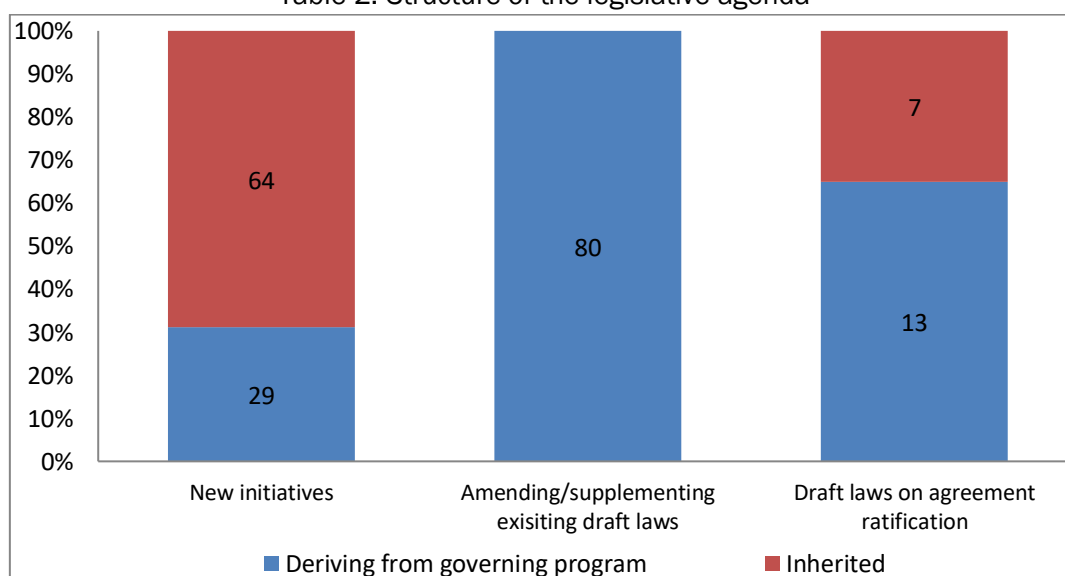
The agenda foresees to amend/supplement 80 existing laws, 20-draft law on agreement ratification, and a total of 193 draft laws to be presented before the Assembly, thus, making it one of the most ambitious legislative programs that a government has put forward in the recent years. When comparing with the trend of the last five years, the Kurti's II Government has the highest number of new initiatives to amend/supplement the existing ones (See Table 1).

Table 1: Number of draft laws on legislative agendas over the years



On 93 new draft laws, 29 are new legislative initiatives, while 64 laws are inherited from the previous legislative agendas (see table 2).

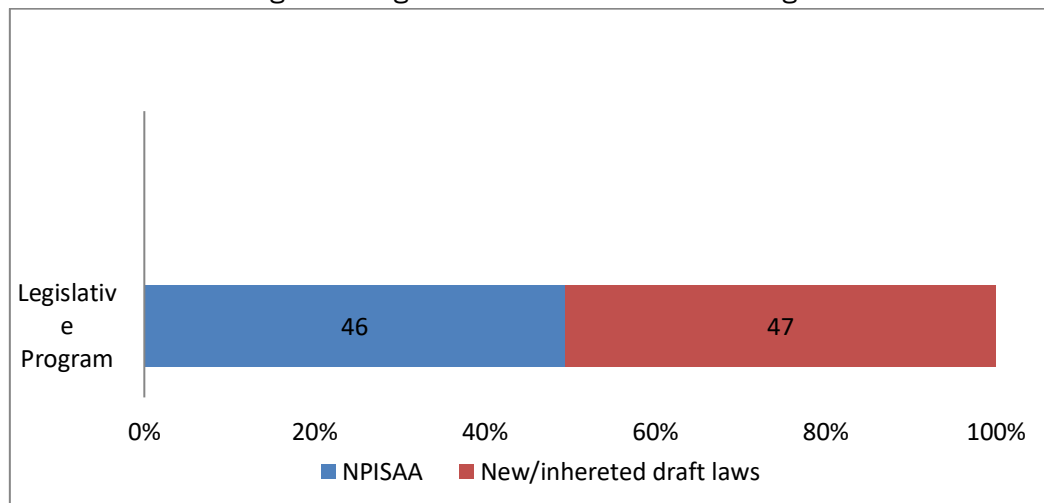
Table 2: Structure of the legislative agenda



⁴¹ Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2021). Available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/qeveria-miraton-programin-qeverises-per-vitet-2021-2025/>

With a look at the commitments deriving from the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) and the European Reform Agenda (ERA) II, 46 new draft laws refer to the SAA agreement, and the Government National Program for its implementation (2021-2025), which has not been approved yet.⁴² (See Table 3)

Table 3: Correlation of legislative agenda with the draft law deriving from the draft of NPISAA



In terms of performance, the Kurti's II Government remains slow on its pace to fulfill the legislative agenda for 2021.⁴³ Overall, 14.5% of the legislative program only has either been approved by the government, reached the Assembly, or went to public consultation. Considering that half of the year is over, the program's effective fulfillment and implementation is going to be missed. Based on the data, analysis and trends presented above, the legislative agenda is too ambitious and, therefore, it is highly improbable that it will be put into practice by the end of the year.

VII. FOREIGN POLICY

Kosovo holds an exceptional position in the international arena due to the lack of recognition by certain countries. Therefore, creating the basis for a credible foreign policy strategy, while investing in a professional diplomatic staff should be a key priority for this Government. Likewise, securing as much recognitions as possible in the United Nations (UN) and participating in international fora is crucial for ending Kosovo's isolation. For this purpose, strategic planning and cooperation between state institutions are decisive.

The Kurti's II Government plan 2021-2025⁴⁴ does include foreign policy. Yet, how to measure progress in this sector is general is not explained, problematic issues are not specified, and no details about possible solutions are provided.

For that reason, a specific action plan is necessary to address the main problems in foreign policy and in the Foreign Service. Specifically, with reference to the latter, it is urged to detect where the problems stem from (i.e., composition of the diplomatic staff, legislation, or lack of a national strategy for diplomacy). Additionally, a team for carrying out the Foreign Service's reform should be set up, while properly identifying the key principles and institutions involved.

⁴² Based on the draft document open for consultation on February 2021

⁴³ This analysis has gathered data from 23 of March 2021 to 29 of June 2021.

⁴⁴ Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2021). Available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Programi-i-Qeverise-se-Kosoves-2021-2025.pdf>

Also, this reform should be free from political retaliation, while being performance and merit-based.

To this end, a substantial decision the Foreign Service has undertaken in its first days is the dismissal of politically appointed ambassadors,⁴⁵ and this move is to be highly welcomed. Among the key reasons for the downgrading of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD) has been the appointment of unprofessional and politically affiliated individuals, leading to exceeding the professional quota, which stipulates that the appointment should be 50% of career ambassadors and 50% of political ones. Up to now, this quota has been massively misused.

Therefore, the decision of the MFAD to dismiss politically appointed ambassadors is the first step to address compliance with this quota. The new Government must prove that the new appointees have high professional integrity, and no political affiliations, as it has been the practice since 2008. It must also commit to maintaining the professionalism in the Foreign Service, starting with a thorough reassessment of those who have been promoted so far.

To be said otherwise, the MFAD's staff recruitment process should be carried out via a proper review and assessment of the work already done. Concretely, the review and the evaluation process should examine the illegal positions held outside of the mandates, the professional staff's appointment in consular foreign services, the arranged returns and the current performance of the staff deployed abroad. The Ministry should prioritize its functional reorganization, revision of the organizational chart, and the functioning of the Diplomatic Academy.

Dialogue with Serbia

Since March 8th, 2011, the EU-led Dialogue on the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia has experienced its ebbs and flows. The political setting of Kosovo has often been guided by the Dialogue process and its inherent dynamics. Prime Minister Albin Kurti declared, after the landslide victory in the elections, that the Dialogue is not his Government's priority, despite of the requests of international allies, such as the EU and the U.S., for speedy resumption of the talks. Nevertheless, a shift of the Government's priorities followed later on with the Dialogue climbing up on the top of the agenda.

On the 15th of June, Kurti and Vucic met face to face for the first time under the Dialogue's format on the normalization of relations facilitated by the European Union.⁴⁶ The first meeting clearly unveiled that both parties have opposite views about a final solution over the Dialogue. After the meeting, the Serbian President said he agreed with Kurti on absolutely nothing.⁴⁷ Kurti's approach in the first meeting represented a change in comparison with its counterparts. Apart from the request for recognition by Serbia, prime minister Kurti made four proposals: Trade Agreement (SEFTA); the signing of a peace declaration between Kosovo and Serbia after the NATO summit; the request for Veljko Odalović, being one of the people leading

⁴⁵ "Politically appointed ambassadors dismissed from Foreign Service", KOHA (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/271737/shkarkohen-te-gjithe-ambasadoret-e-emeluar-politikisht/> [Accessed 19 May 2021].

⁴⁶ "Belgrade-Prishtina Dialogue: Press Statement by EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák following the meeting" EEAS (2021). Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/100074/belgrade-pristina-dialogue-press-statement-eu-special-representative-miroslav-laj%C4%8D%C3%A1k_en [Accessed 15 June 2021].

⁴⁷ "Kurti – Vucic meeting ends/Serbian President: They came to agree on nothing" Available at: <https://top-channel.tv/2021/06/15/perfundon-takimi-kurti-vucic-presidenti-serb-ata-erdhen-qe-te-merren-vesh-per-asgje/> [Accessed 15 June 2021].

the occupation of Kosovo, to leave the Serbian Commission for missing persons; the establishment of a National Council for Serbs, as in Serbia for Albanians.⁴⁸ However, neither a consensus was reached on the Kurti's proposals or on the agenda of the Dialogue. Yet, after months of standstill the return to the negotiation table is good news, while the blockade of the process would have significant repercussions on Kosovo.

In addition to that, the recent elected Government is responsible to reach a consensus across the entire political spectrum on the matter. Firstly, because the Dialogue is not solely an issue of the Government, but it is a state duty. Secondly, despite the power of the new Government in the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, it must insist on cross-party cooperation by providing the necessary infrastructure for substantial involvement of the parliamentary opposition in the Dialogue process. This should be done for two reasons: first, because the Dialogue is not a common political issue, but it is decisive for the future of Kosovo and the consolidation of its own statehood. Throughout the Dialogue the country may face difficult topics and demands for compromises on a consensual political response. Second, it should serve as a lesson learned of a disrupted representation in the Dialogue in the past, paving the way to worse scenarios likely to undermine the statehood of Kosovo.⁴⁹ Despite a domestic consensus, the way forward requires transatlantic cooperation.⁵⁰ Hence, a proactive approach by involving the EU and the U.S. is needed with a view at reaching a final agreement in the process. Also, the institutional capacities and the political stability—could, in principle, secure a sustainable continuation of the talks.

The first three months of the Kurti's Government in regard to the Dialogue were characterized by high level meetings with EU representatives, leaders of the EU member states and the high representatives of the U.S. Inevitably, new dynamics also resulting from a stronger transatlantic coordination between the EU and the U.S in the Dialogue are necessary and welcomed for Kosovo. Thus, the Kurti's II Government should continue exploring possible scenarios for a final agreement, while clearly displaying the unconditional engagement with its international allies.

It is of crucial importance that the “to wait and see” approach is not in favor of Kosovo. Hence, the Kurti's II Government, holding a vast legitimacy countrywide, should work on providing a new direction to the Dialogue.

European Integration Process

The Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) for the Western Balkans is a key EU policy for the region, and it has been created to enable the countries' accession to the EU. The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) is the first contractual agreement between the European Union and Kosovo with a view to speed up the country's EU membership. In this regard, the Government of Kosovo has lacked clear initiatives and targeted actions to push forward the implementation of the SAA and of the National Plan for Implementation of the Stabilization

⁴⁸ The meeting between Kurti and Vucic concluded the next round of dialogue in July, 15 June 2021. Available at: <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2021/06/15/the-meeting-between-kurti-and-vucic-concluded-the-next-round-of-dialogue-is-in-july/> [Accessed 4 July 2021].

⁴⁹ “Pitfalls of the dialogue with Serbia. Why Kosovo needs a new negotiation strategy?” GLPS (2021). Available at: http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/GLPS_PolicyNotes_AF.pdf [Accessed 10 June 2021].

⁵⁰ “International Competition and Geopolitical Stakes in the framework of the resumption of the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue” GLPS (2020) Available at: http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GLPS_PolicyReport_0120_DialoguewithSerbia.pdf [Accessed 21 April 2021].

Agreement (NIPSAA) in particular. Bearing in mind the importance of the SAA, this is a major shortcoming, which hinders Kosovo's path towards the EU integration.

Following the SAA and its obligations, parties have already agreed on the second phase of the European Reform Agenda (ERA 2). Its Action Plan has been drafted and passed the consultation process, and it is waiting the approval from the Government to enter into force for a two-year term. However, NIPSAA has still to be approved. The document has passed the consultation process since the end of January. It is unclear if the Kurti's II Government is seeking to adjust it for the second half of the year, or if it will continue with this one; nevertheless, measures as foreseen in the NPISAA are included in the Government's legislative agenda.

But it remains vital for Kosovo's institutions to explore the possibilities offered by the SAA. The contrary could undermine Kosovo's European path. Therefore, the country needs to take concrete steps to offer short-, mid and long-term policy solutions in crosscutting sectors. Alignment and commitment with the EU policies and the implementation of the required measures should be prioritized by the current Government.

VIII. ENVIROMENT

The hot issue of Hydropower Plants

Protecting the environment and preventing the exploitation of natural resources should definitely be one of the Government's priorities for the upcoming years. During its electoral campaign, LVV continuously stated that it would take actions against the hydropower plants in Kosovo once in power.

During these first 100 days of governance, the Minister of Environment, Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, Mr. Liburn Aliu, held several meetings with civil society representatives, citizens and the Kosovo's Ombudsman. Also, he created a working group within the Ministry to assess and report on the legality of the hydropower plants in the country.

On the 16th of April 2021, the Minister held meetings with representatives from Deçan, Kacanik, Brezovica, Biti and Sterpce, among others, during which citizens and CSOs' representatives stated their concerns about the damages caused by the hydropower plants in their communities.⁵¹ Also, during this meeting the Minister declared that its Ministry would issue soon a moratorium on all hydropower plants in Kosovo. At present, no such a moratorium has been placed by the Ministry yet. The initiatives and meetings with citizens and CSOs to discuss the damages caused by the hydropower plants and the alternatives in place stress the positive approach of the Government about environmental issues.

On the 22nd of April 2021, the Minister visited the hydropower plants in the Shterpce municipality, promising that all procedures relating to these plants would be reviewed.⁵² Also, on the same day the Minister met the Kosovo's Ombudsman to discuss the report issued by the latter on the legality of hydropower plants in Kosovo.⁵³ On the 14th of May 2021, the Minister created a Working Group tasked with the duty to assess the administrative procedures of hydropower plants and their effect on the environment and waters in Kosovo. According to the

⁵¹ "Minister Aliu discusses hydropower plants with representatives of civil society," Kosovo Energy (2021). Available at: <https://kosovo.energy/ministri-aliu-diskuton-hidrocentralet-me-perfaqesuesit-e-shogerise-civile/> [Accessed 10 June 2021].

⁵² "Aliu: Hydropower companies release water only during announced visits" Koha.net (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/267787/aliu-ne-brezovice-kemi-pasur-ankesa-nga-banore-e-aktiviste-per-hidrocentralet/> [Accessed 15 June 2021].

⁵³ "Minister Liburn Aliu met with the Ombudsman Naim Qelaj" Official Facebook Page of the Ministry (2021). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/mmph.rks/posts/4480004088693593/> [Accessed 15 June 2021].

decision of the Minister, the Working Group is obliged to prepare a report with analyses and recommendations until the 30th of June 2021. The Working Group also held a meeting on the 1st of June 2021 with CSOs' representatives discussing the content of the report, and it requested upon the CSOs to send their questions/comments in writing afterwards.

In addition to that, in May 2021, the disciplinary commission of the Ministry issued a decision dismissing the director of the Regional River Basin Authority, Mr. Gani Berisha, because of serious violations of official duties in the licensing of hydropower plants.⁵⁴

Although many promises were made and many meetings were held, the Ministry has not issued a decision stopping the work of the illegal hydropower plants in Kosovo yet. Since the Working Group is bound to forward its report on the 30th of June 2021, it is yet to be seen what it will recommend and how the Ministry will react in this respect. Overall, the Kurti's II Government paid due attention to the legality and the environmental impact of the hydropower plants initiated in the past in its 100 days of duty. The working group is a necessary step for upcoming actions based on the Law about the hydropower plants. Hence, the Ministry shall exhaust all the existing legal measures to ensure that the environment will be protected in the interest of the public good.

CONCLUSION

Kosovo has been severely challenged by the COVID-19's crisis management. Uncertainty characterized the first two months of the Kurti's II Government on how to effectively deal with the pandemic. The lack of a clear operational strategy was evident as the situation deteriorated, and the Government's response was not appropriate to the existing conditions. However, with the provision of a greater number of vaccines and additional measures, COVID-19's management has solidly progressed. The number of vaccinated persons remains a concern as Kosovo still ranks last in the region in terms of vaccination, and it lags far behind its target of 60% of the population to be vaccinated by the end of 2021. However, the improvement in the situation in the fight against COVID-19 is evident compared to the day the Kurti's II Government took office.

As per the economic recovery, the Kurti II's Government has missed most of its objectives and targeted measures in the first quarter. Particularly, those referring to the private sector have been lacking, thus, fully disclosing the Government's substantial deficit on the one hand, and the significant damage caused by the pandemic on the other hand.

However, a positive aspect is the first reading of the draft law on the abolition of homologation for vehicles imported from the EU, Switzerland and Norway, as a progressive policy serving the interests and needs of Kosovo's citizens.

As far as justice is concerned, whether a comprehensive vetting of all affected institutions was promised, the current vetting plan foresees proposals for judges and prosecutors only. But if other institutions falling under the rule of law sector are excluded from the by not addressing the sector's systemic shortcomings. In addition, the establishment of a commercial court does not necessarily guarantee quality. In fact, the draft law on the commercial court is very ambitious, and it is in violation of international and constitutional principles, which may hinder the scope of its own implementation.

⁵⁴'The director of the ARPL is fired for violations in the licensing of HPPs' Koha.net (2021). Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/272584/fshesa-ne-mmphi-nis-me-shkarkimin-e-dreitorit-te-arpl-se/> [Accessed 20 June 2021].

The Kurti's II Government legislative agenda is overly ambitious and it lacks a realistic timeline. Compared to the legislative agendas of the last five years, the current Government has the highest number of new initiatives to amend the existing laws.

The Dialogue with Serbia remains one of the most delicate and important issues for Kosovo in the field of foreign policy. On June 15, 2021, Kurti and Vucic met for the first time with both sides having opposed views on a final solution.

In addition to the request for recognition from Serbia, Prime Minister Kurti made four proposals concerning with issues ranging from regional economic co-operation, the peace agreement, up to the missing persons. However, a consensus was reached neither on the Kurti's proposals nor on the Dialogue agenda. GLPS considers the lack of an internal political consensus on the continuation of the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue, as well as of a clear platform with targeted objectives from both sides as a serious deficit the current Government should necessarily prioritize.

Policy Analysis

Policy Analysis in general is a policy advice paper which particularly aims to influence the key means through which policy decisions are made in both local and central levels of government. The purpose of Policy Analysis is to address, more in-depth, a particular problem, to examine the arguments related to a concerned policy, and to analyze the implementation of the policy. Through Policy Analysis, Group for Legal and Political studies seeks to stimulate wider comprehensive debate on the given issue via presenting informed policy-relevant choices and recommendations to the key stakeholders and parties of interest.



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