

REVIEWING KURTI'S NEW GOVERNMENT PLAN: What is realistic, what is implausible and what is missing?

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KURTI'S NEW GOVERNMENT PLAN: WHAT IS REALISTIC, WHAT IS IMPLAUSIBLE AND WHAT IS MISSING?

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KURTI'S NEW GOVERNMENT PLAN: WHAT IS REALISTIC, WHAT IS IMPLAUSIBLE AND WHAT IS MISSING?

Introduction

The year it celebrated 13 years of independence, we find the Republic of Kosovo struggling, as many countries worldwide. The unprecedented global Covid-19 pandemic has been ruling international relations and geopolitics for the past two years, and exacerbating dire economic or humanitarian needs of countries across all corners of the world and all levels of development.

In the lead-up to the outbreak of the pandemic at a domestic level, Kosovo was already facing big sociopolitical issues, notably core issues such as government instability and uncertain international standing vis-à-vis neighboring countries or the European Union. The Covid-19 pandemic aggravated economic needs, sharpened social polarization and heightened political challenges owed to repeat governmental crises linked to fragile coalitions, votes of no-confidence or toppled leadership.

As recently as March 2021, Albin Kurti was once more elected Prime Minister. After his sudden removal from power just 12 months prior, the Assembly confirmed his triumphant return. With great power came great responsibility: the new Government plan needed to tackle the dire domestic situation and put forth a sturdy recovery plan.

This Policy Notes takes a hard look at Kurti's proposed 2021-2025 Government plan to assess what are the new cabinet's key priorities for the post-pandemic Kosovar reality, how will it approach Euro-Atlantic integration aims linked to foreign policy, and what to make of the proposed main public policy sectors. It argues that Kurti's Vetëvendosje appears as a breath of fresh air in Kosovar domestic politics, eager to focus on long-term action with real positive impact for future generations and to shake

up the country's lesser standing in the Dialogue with Serbia.

I. ALBIN KURTI'S RENEWED TAKE ON POWER

2021 has been an eventful year for Kosovo domestic politics. In April, the 2021 Presidential elections, only the 5th elections of this nature to be held since the country's 2008 independence, saw Vjosa Osmani take on the role. She had been acting as interim President after President Hashim Thaci's resignation in November 2020.

In addition to this important leadership shift, a new – yet another – parliamentary election had been in the works since December 2020. It was the cherry on top of the **turbulent internal politics year, besides overall high tensions due to the harsh economic and social of the pandemic**. 2020 saw the first Government Vetëvendosje's Albin Kurti fall at the hands of a no-confidence vote prompted by its own junior coalition partner, Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), in March 2020. Avdullah Hoti succeeded on 3 June and formed a new PDK/LDK coalition Government, following a vote of 61–24, with one abstention. However, a Constitutional Court ruling from 21 December 2020 terminated the cabinet, rendering Kosovar political stability at a crossroads once more¹. Constitutional Court ruling noted that one of the votes in favor of Hoti and which allowed for a PDK/LDK parliamentary majority (that of Etem Arifi of the minority Ashkali Party for Integration) was, in fact, invalid. The reason being Arifi having since been convicted of fraud and set to serve a prison sentence.

¹Reuters, "Kosovo's highest court rules parliamentary vote electing government was illegal", 21 December 2020, online via: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-kosovo-court-ruling-government-idUKKBN28V2UT?edition-redirect=uk>.

As a result, a **snap election** was called for 14 February 2021, and Albin Kurti's Vetëvendosje (VV), alongside the independent party list of Vjosa Osmani as coalition partner, took a distant lead. Their main goal was shared and clear: to fight corruption, create jobs, and deliver social justice, and put forth a socio-economically orientated movement. A year after being ousted, almost to the day, Kurti was once more, voted into power as Kosovo's Prime Minister by MPs – with 67 of the 120 votes in favor, 30 votes against². **VV garnered 50, 28% of the votes – never had a party won as many votes** in any Kosovar election since independence³.

Kurti's ambitions are high and, insofar, on an upward ladder. In a recent *Euronews* interview, the incumbent Prime Minister expressed his will to “elect the speaker of the parliament, a new Government and a new President. We need two-thirds of MPs to sustain the vote”⁴. Following the election of Osmani for President of the Republic, VV's historic majority win in the legislative elections and his own confirmation as Prime Minister, it is up to hold his power accountable in seeking the best for the country.

After a turbulent year of pandemic and transitional governments, it is worth noting the **power Kosovar citizens demonstrated in mobilizing votes in favor of Kurti's centrist party and therein bringing about a substantial political change**. After the landslide election, Kurti himself

²Balkan Insight, "Kosovo Parliament Elects Albin Kurti as Prime Minister", 22 March 2021, online via: <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/03/22/kosovo-parliament-elects-albin-kurti-as-prime-minister/>.

³Republic of Kosovo, "ZGJEDHJET PËR KUVENDIN E KOSOVËS 2021", no date, online via: <https://www.kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2.Rezultatet-sipas-subjekteve-politike-1.pdf>.

⁴Euronews, "I would vote to unify Albania and Kosovo, election winner Albin Kurti tells Euronews", 16 February 2021, online via: <https://www.euronews.com/2021/02/16/i-would-vote-to-unify-albania-and-kosovo-election-winner-albin-kurti-tells-euronews>.

highlighted that “The elections of 14 February were a reaffirmation of our vitality as a society and as a people”⁵. The mass voting in favor of VV was indeed so historic that it prompted a series of resignations among the leadership of the losing parties, most notably in LDK, VV's former junior coalition partner in the previous short-lived 2020 Government.

II. AMBITIOUS PLAN, DIRE REALITY PRIORITIES?

Economic growth and potential has been halted, and put into question, worldwide across underdeveloped, developing and developed countries in light of the pandemic. State resources were channeled in urgent support of the public health sector, while mass bailouts were put in place for severely affected sectors such as tourism, food services and recreational services. **The Covid-19 pandemic shook economic growth and public health indicators, and the newborn Republic that is Kosovo was no exception**. In fact, Kosovo registered one of the highest infection rates and, currently, the lowest immunization rate in the Western Balkan region. The WHO reports, in Kosovo, from January 2020 to 27 September 2021, 159,445 confirmed Covid-19 cases had been confirmed and 2,907 deaths. As of 21 September 2021, 1,274,156 vaccine doses had been administered⁶. For comparison purposes, in Albania the number of administered vaccine doses was that of 1,693,555 for the same time period⁷, and 6,409,263 in Serbia⁸.

⁵Republic of Kosovo - Prime Minister Office, "Prime Minister Kurti presented to the Assembly the Government Program for 2021-2025", 17 May 2021, online via: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/prime-minister-kurti-presented-to-the-assembly-the-government-program-for-2021-2025/>.

⁶World Health Organization, Country dashboard - Kosovo, online via: <https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/xk> [Accessed 27 September 2021].

⁷World Health Organization, Country dashboard - Albania, online via:

Unsurprisingly, Albin Kurti is expected to first and foremost tackle mitigating the public health situation and, in parallel and necessarily linked, manage how to take up economic recovery. In a refreshing occurrence in terms of Kosovar domestic politics, the citizens' most pressing appear as that of a national reality. In other words, key development issues raised by mobilized population groups and put forth by the Government lie not in the dialogue with Serbia or progressive alignment to the EU acquis, but rather in structural reforms for a more robust public health sector and a plan to mitigate the economic and social consequences arisen from the pandemic. The onus switched from foreign policy matters to domestic matters which, given the stalled nature of the Dialogue and Euro-Atlantic integration aims, is argued in this Policy Note as the best way forward.

It can indeed be argued that, by **focusing on domestic matters and national development and growth**, the progress brought about could eventually enabling unpausing the currently stalled Dialogue on the Normalization of relations with Serbia, for example. Should Kosovo progress domestically and succeed in implementing relevant reforms for growth, its bargaining power necessarily increases, and its ability to lobby for integration, such as the long-promised visa liberalization, with MEPs. This domestic-boosting-the-foreign outlook is shared by Albin Kurti. When presenting his Government's 2021-2025 plan, in a 17 May speech at the Assembly of Kosovo, he proposed "beyond the 4-year program, I invite you to collaborate on a strategy for the future. (...) Let us call it Kosovo 2030 or Kosovo 2040, but let us have it, because the future of our country depends on the

<https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/al>
[Accessed 27 September 2021].

⁸World Health Organization, Country dashboard - Serbia, online via:
<https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/rs>
[Accessed 27 September 2021].

actions we take today, but also on the thoughts and long-term plans"⁹.

Notwithstanding, it is important to also note that, rightfully so, there are also **clear calls for Kurti to deliver on the foreign policy front**. Ensuring Kosovo retains and improves its international recognition and overall standing is fundamental for the future of the country of limited-recognition. This arguably stands as Kurti's third biggest challenge, following failed negotiations and advancements at the hand of previous governments due to lack of consensus.

All in all, the returning Prime Minister's aim is to "Build a society where everyone earns the part they deserve and pays the obligation that belongs to them, a society where no one is left behind"¹⁰. We lay out how he plans to tackle this overarching and ambitious objective by detailing the two most urgent priorities and the remaining pressing policy sectors, for a renewed Kosovo 2030 or 2040, and certainly 2025.

III. THE 2021-2025 GOVERNMENT PLAN

Albin Kurti has set up a progressive, social-democrat Government with clear set targets on Kosovar national interest and Albanian nationalism. Its cabinet counts on 17 Ministers. He presented the 2021-2025 Government plan on 17 May before the Assembly of Kosovo, and explained his "aim to focus on two basic and most urgent priorities"¹¹.

Firstly, Managing the Covid-19 pandemic with a view to minimize the consequences on public health and, secondly mitigating the economic and social consequences caused by the pandemic by means of mobilized state action.

⁹ May speech

¹⁰Republic of Kosovo - Prime Minister Office, "Prime Minister Kurti presented to the Assembly the Government Program for 2021-2025", 17 May 2021.

¹¹ Government of the Republic of Kosovo, The Programme of the Republic of Kosovo 2021-2025, May 2021, pg.5.

3.1. Managing the Covid-19 pandemic

Governmental action towards combating the Covid-19 pandemic in the country lies, most importantly at this stage, on the immunization front - "The engagement of providing vaccines is a measure of high priority¹². The Plan's **proposed target of vaccinating 60% of the population by the end of 2021** is in stark contrast to the 70% immunization mark reached by the European Union in September 2021¹³. It demonstrates how Kosovo lags behind on vaccinating its citizens, having been the last country in the region to start its vaccination campaign, which started with Prime Minister Albin Kurti's administration of an AstraZeneca dose on 28 March 2021 received via the COVAX mechanism¹⁴(in contrast to Albania's first vaccine administration in January 2021, for reference)¹⁵.

The Coronavirus pandemic has brought about a so-called 'vaccine-diplomacy' as a new layer of power politics. Global actors have come to use vaccine-sharing mechanisms as a means to boost their soft power and international alliances, as is the case of China and Russia which have both produced a state-owned vaccine

Kurti has also spoken out about **accepting vaccines from estranged global partners**. In a February 2021 interview with *Euronews*, he maintained that is not

interested in accepting vaccines not recognized by the European Medical Agency: "we are not going to get vaccines from Serbia, which gets vaccines from Russia and China. Both in terms of values and interests, our orientation has always been towards the West. (...) We don't want to replace the EU and US with any Eastern non-democratic powers because it has been proven that there is no certainty regarding quality, on the one hand, and on the other hand, there are always strings attached in the form of geopolitical games"¹⁶. Being VV a political party with ethnic Albanian nationalist tendencies and Euro-Atlantic aims for Kosovo, Kurti is strategic when aligning with partner countries, even if in matters of soft power.

In parallel, the Plan lays out that **additional measures on other relevant fronts** will be taken to prevent and control the pandemic in the country. These includes but is not limited to continuous vocational training for medical personnel, educating citizens through awareness campaigns, drafting Covid-19 treatment guidelines, and strengthen oversight mechanisms for monitoring and implementation of safety and containment measures.

As described in his speech before the Assembly of the Republic when presenting the Government plan, the Prime Minister described **Kosovo's health system** as "weak and underdeveloped"¹⁷. The Government plan therefore seeks an all-encompassing restoration of the public health sector - "Our priority for the healthcare sector, in addition to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, will also be to implement a comprehensive reform that allows for the development of

¹²Ibid, pg.7.

¹³European Commission - Press corner, "Coronavirus: 70% of the EU adult population fully vaccinated", 31 August 2021, online via: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_4362.

¹⁴Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, "Kosovo PM Becomes Nation's First Person To Receive COVID-19 Vaccine", 28 March 2021, online via: <https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-covid-vaccines-immunization-last-europe-astrazeneca-covax/31174048.html>.

¹⁵AP News, "Albania carries out 1st vaccinations with donated doses", 11 January 2021, online via: <https://apnews.com/article/europe-albania-edi-rama-coronavirus-pandemic-infectious-diseases-e49f438fc861399def4481eb78241b32>.

¹⁶Euronews, "I would vote to unify Albania and Kosovo, election winner Albin Kurti tells Euronews", 16 February 2021.

¹⁷Republic of Kosovo - Prime Minister Office, "Prime Minister Kurti presented to the Assembly the Government Program for 2021-2025", 17 May 2021.

the healthcare system"¹⁸. The intended reforms includes establishing an integrated health information system, strengthening inspection and monitoring capacities, improving quality of services by liaising with Diaspora expertise exchanges, and also ensuring correct implementation of public health insurance schemes.

3.2. Mitigating the socioeconomic consequences caused by the pandemic

States have attempted to take on the severe and multi-layered socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic as a chance to 'build back better'. In other words, as a chance to refocus the economy towards sustainability, digitalization and inclusivity, as even detailed in the EU's own post-pandemic Recovery Plan.

Kurti details **Kosovo's outlook of building back better** as "a new opportunity to redirect our economy toward production and export, toward increasing dignified employment for all, and toward sustainable, environment-friendly employment for the next generations. We will engage to incite investments in new production and export capacities that create sustainable jobs through direct lending support to production businesses"¹⁹. It is an opportunity to focus on a **greener and more inclusive economy**, business environment, labor market and infrastructure. In order to alleviate the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic, the Plan implies the mobilization of the resource potential of the state. This could imply, for instance, a digital transition of modernizing ITC tools, and a green transition of improving air quality and waste management.

The main tool the Government will use to implement the country's long-term development priorities and address public

policy challenges is the **National Development Strategy** (NDS), to be made public by the end of the year 2021 as the previous 2016-2021 NDS expires. It will detail strategic objectives and intended outcomes of state action related to prominent portfolios such as the Sustainable Development Goals, Green commitment and the European integration agenda.

As such, the Government will seek comprehensive economic growth entailing job creation and redesigning fiscal policies, rooted in sustainable transitions to how industry and trade are handled. **Unemployment rates in Kosovo remains the highest in the Western Balkan region**. On job creation, intervention measures will be taken in the years to come to support those who lost their jobs, first-time employees and affected businesses. The aim is to provide support to those most affected until economic activity appropriately recovers, and lay off staff may be re-hired and businesses report better or more stable revenues.

In order to cover the gap of **households which have lost income** and purchasing power, state aid is foreseen to increase liquidity. It will be done by raising the minimum wage to EUR 250 (for 40 working hours per week), and by raising the non-taxable wage threshold to the minimum wage level. A cross-cutting measure on job creation also entails a formalization of the economy to better protect worker's rights and working conditions, therein linking economic growth to social justice.

To **finance the abovementioned intervention state measures as part of the economic development plan**, the Government Plan notes the intention to negotiate and sign international financial agreements and issue securities. On the topic of financing, the Kosovar Diaspora is highlighted as "an integral and strong part of the sustainable economic development

¹⁸The Programme of the Republic of Kosovo 2021-2025, May 2021, pg.10.

¹⁹The Programme of the Republic of Kosovo 2021-2025, May 2021, pg.8.

plan. By creating investment facilities, we will ensure that the capital of our Diaspora is channeled into investments that generate jobs. Therefore, starting from the first year, we will issue treasury bills dedicated to the Diaspora"²⁰.

Moreover, other key themes present in the proposed Government Plan is a **gender focus** to support female employment and the economic empowerment of women and women-run businesses, and better (more sustainably) exploiting Kosovo's great **natural resources and agricultural potential** both for domestic needs and export advantage.

Finally, the 2021-2025 Government Plan for Kosovo proposed **establishing three new agencies**²¹: Sovereign Fund (take ownership of national strategic assets to boost foreign investment), Development Agency (to lead development policies between Ministries and independent development agencies), and the Development Bank of Kosovo (to support the private sector and promote investment).

3.3. OTHER FOCAL POLICY AREAS

Besides the two main areas and tasks the Government plans to undertake in during the next five years, other public policy sectors must be underlined from the 2021-2025 Programme.

In line with previous Government's objectives and the international community's repeated calls, **Rule of Law** is a priority area. It will seek to reform the criminal, civil, administrative and justice system, and focus on combating crime and corruption as a means for socioeconomic transformation. The intended outcome of such focus is to ensue better governance and, moreover, "social inclusion of all citizens of Kosovo"²².

The Government has put forth a strong emphasis on investing in **"equality, protection, and equal opportunities**. (...) [To create] a society with equal rights and opportunities requires a fair, impartial and effective system"²³. Linked to the Government's centrist agenda and popularity among the youth, human rights are put at the forefront.

In line with this, Kurti has secured **Education and Science** as another key sector, arguing that "A society that invests in education to secure the future by educating our children and young people to be ready to compete in the global market is our main concern"²⁴. Such an investment and focus on forward-looking areas once more show the Government's long-term vision, and would be able to counter one of the country - and the region's biggest problem: brain drain of skilled professionals and academics to Western, developed countries.

3.4. FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATIONS

Long has Kosovo's domestic policy been dependent on its foreign policy needs and requirements. Be it linked to the Dialogue with Serbia, the EU acquis accession harmonization needs, or overall strive for universal sovereign recognition. Kosovar government plans commonly propose a focus on NATO and EU (Euro-Atlantic) integration and on improving or formalizing partnerships worldwide.

In his first speech to the Assembly as re-elected Prime Minister, Albin Kurti argued that "Our foreign policy is also an important pillar of our international subjectivity, but also of our democratic state-building. It should protect us from enemies and deepen our cooperation with our friends, so our orientations for **integration into NATO and the European**

²⁰ Ibid, pg.8.

²¹The Programme of the Republic of Kosovo 2021-2025, May 2021, pg.8.

²²Ibid, pg.5.

²³Republic of Kosovo - Prime Minister Office, "Prime Minister Kurti presented to the Assembly the Government Program for 2021-2025", 17 May 2021.

²⁴Ibid.

Union are clear"²⁵. Inasmuch, accession to the European Union remains a priority to the incumbent cabinet, while acknowledging it as a process that needs tending to and should not be approached as a zero-sum-game task.

Very much linked to eventual EU accession is the need to maintain positive and constructive dialogue with the Serbian government. Notwithstanding, both Prime Minister Kurti and President Vjosa Osmani have said that the **Dialogue on Normalization of relations with Serbia** will not be among their top priorities. On this matter, Kurti's government is adamant on not indulging narratives which disfavor Kosovo, highlighting that "Kosovo recognizes dialogue with Serbia as an equal party to resolve outstanding issues, such as clarifying the fate of missing persons (forcibly disappeared), debts and war damages, reparations and succession. Kosovo does not accept and will not participate in any roundtable where it is treated as a topic of dialogue and not as a party"²⁶. Albin Kurti stands out among previous Prime Ministers in his unwavering attitude towards entering the Dialogue as an equal party, in tune with Vetevendosje's Albanian nationalist agenda. In the public interview with Euronews upon his first appointment, Kurti argued that "I think it is not acceptable to anyone in Kosovo - of course, including me - to engage in a dialogue where we are supposed to compensate the state of Serbia for the loss of this state during times of Milosevic. Serbia committed genocide in Kosovo. (...) I think it's very important to address justice being delayed and denied and based on the past in order to have more long-term peace,

²⁵Republic of Kosovo - Prime Minister Office, "Prime Minister Kurti presented to the Assembly the Government Program for 2021-2025", 17 May 2021.

²⁶Ibid.

security, stability and reconciliation"²⁷. In fact, he stated before Members of Parliament that, on the Dialogue and referring to the opposition, "Much of my work and energy in the Dialogue is in undoing the damage you have caused"²⁸, and he will be sure to only acknowledge projects or policies which do no harm to the sovereignty and the interest of the Republic.

Recently, on 26 September given **rising tensions** over license plate disputes, the EU's High Representative, Josep Borrell, asserted that "Serbia and Kosovo need to unconditionally de-escalate the situation on the ground"²⁹, describing escalations as unacceptable, and reminding that "The EU-facilitated Dialogue is the only platform to address and resolve all open issues, and we strongly urge both parties to make full use of it"³⁰. The targeted statements come on top of multiple calls from the EU for Kosovo's new government to prioritize the Dialogue with Serbia as a key facilitator of its EU path.

When laying out the general governance orientations with regard to European integration and foreign policy, the 2021-2025 Government plan notes **deepening cooperation with Albania** as a priority - "the Government of Kosovo will be committed to a structured and institutionalized approach to inter-Albanian

²⁷Euronews, "I would vote to unify Albania and Kosovo, election winner Albin Kurti tells Euronews", 16 February 2021.

²⁸Republic of Kosovo - Prime Minister Office, "Prime Minister Kurti presented to the Assembly the Government Program for 2021-2025", 17 May 2021.

²⁹European External Action Service, "Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell on the situation in the north of Kosovo", 22 September 2021, online via: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/104508/statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-situation-north-kosovo_en.

³⁰European External Action Service, "Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell on the situation in the north of Kosovo", 26 September 2021, online via: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/104657/statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-situation-north-kosovo_en.

cooperation and integration"³¹. This includes areas as diverse as trade, finance, and education and science, such as incrementing cultural cooperation between the two countries³². The Government's work will also focus on harmonizing its foreign policy with that of Albania.

Moreover, Vetëvendosje is keen on amend Kosovo's Constitution a clause prohibiting the country's unification with other countries, as a way to potentially accommodate **federation with Albania via national referendum**. This was unswervingly voiced by Albin Kurti in 2020: "Article 1.1 [of the Constitution of Kosovo] says that Kosovo is a sovereign independent country and Article 1.3 says that Kosovo cannot join another country. I believe that full independence implies also, independence from independence, so we could join a federation with Albania or an EU federation"³³. However, the stance is not shared in Albania and was not well received. The neighboring government, seemingly frustratingly, called for such ideas to end, especially at a time when obstructions to opening EU accession negotiations are being lifted³⁴. In addition, they raised the fact that Kosovo is still a country of limited recognition as yet another reason why the Prime Minister should not advocate for a different status.

3.5. Plea for coordination

As detailed in the preceding chapters, the Republic of Kosovo is undergoing a troubling socioeconomic phase due to the global pandemic's impact on key public sectors. From health to food services and poverty rates, with deep governmental

instability running in parallel, the country is in need of solid leadership.

The 2021-2025 Government plan Albin Kurti and his newly-instated government propose looks to be an **all-encompassing long-term strategy for the country**. One that evidently prioritizes combating the pandemic's epidemiological situation and mitigating its impact on socioeconomic indicators. Yet, just as important, one that offers a holistic view of the country, targeting the youth and future generations by focusing on education, attending to the Rule of Law by asserting the importance of good governance, and refusing to approach the Dialogue with Serbia as the underdog. The proposed general aim and specific target areas will not be easy tasks to check off the to-do list. Remarkably, agreement and appropriate consensus with the opposition will be key in advancing legislation and implementing reforms.

Inasmuch, Kurti does not mince words when it comes to his **plea for consensus and constructive debate**. In his 17 May speech before the Assembly of Kosovo to present the new Government plan, he singled out five key topics "on which we will seek exhaustive debate towards consensus"³⁵: Foreign policy and dialogue with Serbia, Education reform, National security and defense, Health Insurance Fund, and Energy policy. The Prime Minister underlined that all these five areas encompass reforms and policies which immensely affect future generations and therefore carry long-term impact. For this reason, she argues that building consensus among political parties is in the country's best interest to enable long-term actions towards inclusivity, sustainability and good governance.

³¹The Programme of the Republic of Kosovo 2021-2025, May 2021, pg.52.

³²Ibid, pg.45.

³³ Euronews, "I would vote to unify Albania and Kosovo, election winner Albin Kurti tells Euronews", 16 February 2021.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Republic of Kosovo - Prime Minister Office, "Prime Minister Kurti presented to the Assembly the Government Program for 2021-2025", 17 May 2021.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Instated as Prime Minister for the second time in year, and ousted once during that time, Albin Kurti is more than ever adamant on bringing his vision for a better Kosovo to life. Together with Vjosa Osmani, current President of the Republic as of April, Kurti and his cabinet are eager to address urgent key issues linked to the pandemic and its consequences, and lead long-term action linked to reforms and improved international standing of the country. His mindset and government approach can be summed up in his statement that “It is more than numbers and letters and more than savings and expenses, because it is the design of the model of society that we want to build together”³⁶.

The building together is, indeed, key. After years of political instability and tension, the new government carries the difficult task of healing sociopolitical polarization amidst the unprecedented post-pandemic times we are living now. For this reason, the ideas and proposals detailed in the 2021-2025 Government plan must be matched by an effective and transparent cabinet. Real leadership and real accountability is something that Kosovo has often lacked, and desperately needs. Notwithstanding however encouraging the five-year Government plan is, the truth lies in implementation and in political will. The measure of a good Government lies not in what it produces in paper but in what it achieves - and for this we call on the Government to ensure proper follow-up and sustain its openness for consensus among political parties.

The renewed Kurti Government carries the important task of recovering and reviving the country, for which mass mobilization of state resources, for individuals and businesses alike, will be fundamental. The plan's proposed priority on

domestic affairs and structural reforms instead of foreign policy projections is fruitful to the post-pandemic recovery situation. After years of putting its international standing first, reorienting Kosovo's focus to build up domestically and solidify national indicators can turn out to be a better opportunity for the country's Euro-Atlantic aims or final conclusion with the Dialogue with Serbia.

Time will tell how the 2021-2025 government plan presented earlier this year will pan out into designed actions, monitored programmes and implemented reforms - Albin Kurti and his cabinet have a big task ahead of them.

³⁶Ibid.

POLICY NOTE

The Policy Note provides brief, concise, and timely analysis of specific issues. Policy Notes are short reports that describe the reasons behind selecting a particular policy alternative on a current issue/debate. They are usually published for a specific event and advocate for the professional positions of the Group for Legal and Political Studies. More precisely, Policy Notes are advocacy documents, which provide arguments regarding the adaptation/changes of a certain policy. Policy Notes aim at impacting a target audience on the importance/implications/solutions of a current problem, thereby giving recommendations to policymakers, civil society and the media, and the general public.



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