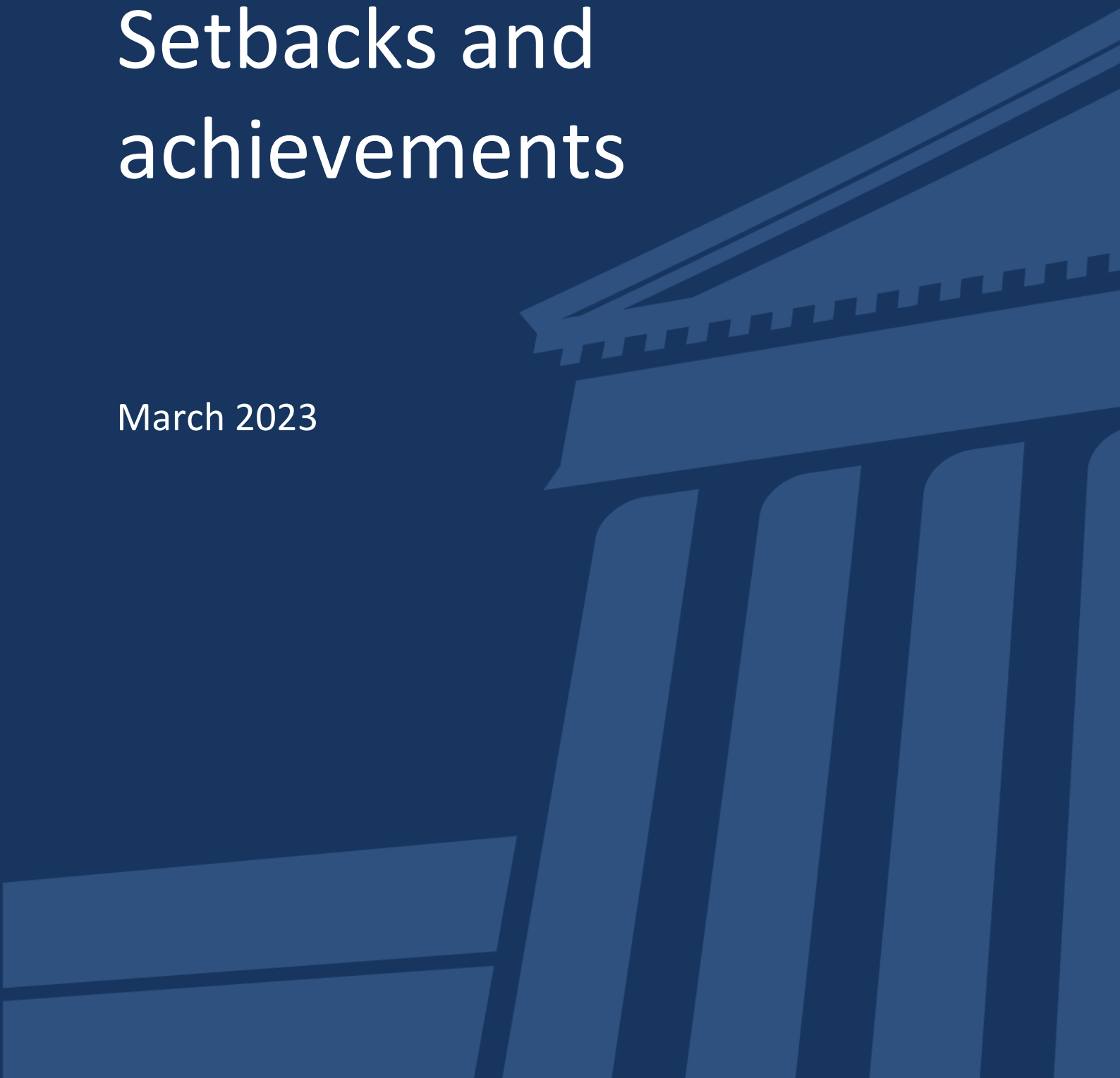


# TWO YEARS OF KURTI II: Setbacks and achievements

March 2023



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# Group for Legal and Political Studies

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## TWO YEARS OF KURTI II: SETBACKS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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## SECOND YEAR OF KURTI II: SETBACKS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

### INTRODUCTION

Kurti II marked two years in power on March 22, a government that took office back in March 2021 with an unprecedented overall vote of 50.28%. Kurti II marked a new political chapter for Kosovo, being the first ever ruling majority post-war. Given the vast number of electoral promises fueling the public hope, it is perceived as a government for transformative changes in various sectors, in particular to rule of law, good governance, proactive foreign policy, and economic development. Entering its third year, is Kurti II managing to achieve these substantial transformations? This Policy Analysis aims to provide a detailed assessment of Government's performance in some of the main sectors, including rule of law, public administration reform, foreign policy, good governance, EU Integration and the Dialogue with Serbia. The first part of the Analysis provides an assessment of rule of law initiatives undertaken since taking office, with particular focus to Vetting Reform, the National Rule of Law Strategy adopted during first year, corruption and organized crime, as well as the confiscation of illicit wealth in civil procedure. It then follows with the public administration reform, including the PAR law package, service delivery, and public finance management among others. While the second part of the report focuses in Kurti II efforts in foreign policy, membership into international organizations, as well as the overall international recognition efforts put forward during this second year. The last part is dedicated to European Integration, and the Dialogue process with Serbia.

### I. RULE OF LAW: NEW REFORMS

In its second year, the government continued its efforts in pushing further its main reform processes within the rule of law sector, namely, the vetting process and the Bureau for confiscation of unjustifiable assets. On top of this, substantial efforts were also put in amending the legislative framework regulation the prosecutorial system in Kosovo, including the Law on Prosecutorial Council, and the Law on the State Prosecutor. In addition, during this year, the Commercial Court was established and started functioning. Reforms initiated in the rule of law sector were among the main electoral promises put forward by LVV in last elections, aiming to fundamentally improve the rule of law and access to justice in Kosovo.

#### a. Rule of Law Strategy 2021 - 2026

The approval of the Rule of Law Strategy 2021-2026<sup>1</sup>, in 2021, marks a significant milestone given the lack of updated institutional analysis in this sector. Based on identified problems through the Rule of Law Functional Review Process, this Strategy has four main objectives: enhancing the effectiveness of the judicial and prosecutorial system, reinforcing the criminal justice system, improving access to justice, and intensifying the fight against corruption. These objectives are further distributed into fifteen specific objectives, creating the basis of the Action Plan, which is organized into fifteen chapters. However, the strategy overlooks civil, administrative, and juvenile justice.

The successful implementation of the Rule of Law Strategy is vital for the long-term stability and development of Kosovo. A well-functioning rule of law system is a cornerstone of a democratic society and essential for attracting foreign investments, improving public services, and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. On the other hand, its

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<sup>1</sup> Rule of Law Strategy 2021-2026, Ministry of Justice, Government of the Republic of Kosovo, August 2021, available at: <https://md.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/6DC1CBD5-0DF1-46AE-9D1A-78C96146C7D0.pdf>

implementation, is crucial for objectively assessing the Strategy's impact on improving the rule of law in Kosovo. According to the 6-month report published in July 2022<sup>2</sup>, the strategy has been fully implemented at 26%, while 54% remain partially implemented or under implementation, and 20% remain unimplemented.

Some of the activities that are not implemented include the regular discussions at the Assembly of Kosovo regarding the annual reports of the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC) and Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC), the drafting of an analysis for capacity and efficiency in the Basic Court of Prishtina, and the establishment of strict and clear criteria for the selection of mentors and coaches. It is essential to recognize that the implementation of these activities is critical to strengthening the rule of law sector i. The regular discussions of the annual reports of both councils in the Assembly of Kosovo would ensure higher transparency and accountability in the judicial system. The drafting of an analysis for capacity and efficiency in the Basic Court of Prishtina would help identify areas where improvements and interventions are necessary, while the establishment of strict criteria for the selection of mentors and coaches would help ensure that individuals with the required skills and experience are providing guidance and support to judicial and prosecutorial personnel.

Despite this, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) considers this a significant level of fulfillment given the short period since its enforcement date.<sup>3</sup> MoJ attributes the good start of the Strategy's implementation to practical activities based on agreed-upon preliminary analyses and the reforming spirit of the government. However, inter-institutional harmonization is necessary for effective implementation and to maintain this positive trend.

In light of the current status of the implementation of the Rule of Law Strategy, it is essential that the government undertakes immediate steps to address the activities that remain partly implemented and unimplemented. This may require greater resources, stronger inter-institutional coordination, and increased efforts to address the challenges that have impeded progress. While the initial results of implementation are encouraging, there are still significant challenges to overcome. Continued efforts are imperative to ensure effective implementation, inter-institutional coordination, and harmonization for sustained progress in improving the rule of law in Kosovo.

## **b. Vetting Process**

The Constitution of Kosovo proclaims judicial power as unique and completely independent from the legislative and executive branches. The judiciary system is a fundamental sector of any functioning democracy, as it serves as the guardian of the rule of law, protects individuals' rights and freedoms, and ensures the supremacy of the law. The presence of widespread corruption, lack of integrity, and accountability within the judiciary system in Kosovo were among key incentive to pushing forward transformative reforms within the sector.

The government prioritized strengthening of the judicial and prosecutorial system, as well as the verification and confiscation of unjustifiable assets, as its main reform processes within the rule of law sector. These objectives aim to enhance transparency, accountability and promote independence and impartiality in the country. The implementation of these objectives is crucial for addressing corruption and organized crime in Kosovo and promoting a more stable and secure environment for the citizens.

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<sup>2</sup> Six Month Report for the Implementation of the Action Plan of Strategy for the Rule of Law, Government of the Republic of Kosovo, July 2022, available at: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Raporti-6-mujor-per-zbatimin-e-PV-te-Strategjise.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Interview with a representative from the Ministry of Justice, Government of the Republic of Kosovo

For many years now, civil society organizations specializing in the field, international mechanisms, and experts have identified and emphasized the importance of deep and comprehensive reforms in the justice system, particularly regarding the vetting process<sup>4</sup>. This matter highlights the indispensable need to address the systemic challenges in the justice sector, as well as the importance of implementing practical measures to improve its efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

The year 2013 marked one of the endeavors to reform the justice system in Kosovo by implementing profound alterations in the organizational and functional structure of the judicial and prosecutorial system. Nevertheless, during the process, these initiatives faced a number of challenges that made it difficult to carry out the implementation<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, one of the primary electoral promises made by LVV in 2019 was the implementation of the thorough and temporary vetting process, which according to the concept document refers to option five that entails constitutional amendments<sup>6</sup>. During the first year of Kurti II government, the MoJ took action to fulfill its objective by establishing a working group to draft the vetting process concept document, and the group was later approved by the government<sup>7</sup>.

In order to address the challenges of the judiciary, the government settled on option five of the Vetting concept which entails constitutional changes creating a new ad-hoc mechanism for the first wave of vetting, and then the continuous performance, integrity, and wealth check to be conducted by the KJC and KPC<sup>8</sup>. In addition, MoJ proposed an alternative to the implementation of the constitutional changes, which is conducting the vetting reform on the basis of legislative changes, as a last resort<sup>9</sup>.

The concept document was sent to the Venice Commission for a recommendatory opinion. Considering the fact that the justice system in Kosovo is in a better position than the countries that underwent a full-scale vetting of judges and prosecutors, the Commission concluded that a thorough vetting process for all judges and prosecutors was not necessary at this stage. Therefore, the Venice Commission recommended constitutional amendments only in regard to integrity checks of the members of the councils, court presidents, and chief prosecutors, in addition to legislative changes in regard to judicial discipline, strengthening the system of asset declaration and strengthening the vetting mechanisms within the councils<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Group for Legal and Political Studies. <http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/glps-held-a-roundtable-discussion-on-the-rule-of-law-priorities-of-the-new-government/> [Accessed 3 February 2023]

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice. “The modalities of calculation with the inclusion of the Vetting in the justice system in Kosovo” Chapter 1.6. Available at: <https://md.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/49D1EDD2-D94B-4A6A-87C0-79F64275F928.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Justice. “Draft Concept paper for the development of the Vetting Process in the Justice System”. Available at: <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=41154> [Accessed 3 February 2023]

<sup>7</sup> Koha.net, “The working group for vetting in the justice system is formalized”. April 2021. Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/268565/formalizohet-grupi-punues-per-vetting-ne-sistemin-e-drejtises/> [Accessed 3 February 2023]

Ministry of Justice. “Draft Concept paper for the development of the Vetting Process in the Justice System”. Available at: <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=41154> [Accessed 3 February 2023]

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Justice. “Draft Concept paper for the development of the Vetting Process in the Justice System”. Chapter 3.5. Available at: <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=41154>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). “Opinion on the Concept paper on the Vetting of Judges and Prosecutors and draft amendments to the Constitution”. June 2022. Available at: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2022\)011-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2022)011-e)

Following that, in May 2022, the MoJ provided a draft of the proposed constitutional changes to the Venice Commission for a reassessment<sup>11</sup>.

In December 2022, the Assembly of the Kosovo established the Ad-hoc Commission for the Development of the Transitional Evaluation Process with a mandate of six (6) months<sup>12</sup>. The MoJ proposed that additional legal measures should be undertaken, including the drafting of the Draft Law on the Control of Integrity of Certain Positions within the Justice System. Therefore, in February 2023, the MoJ held a workshop for the drafting of the Draft Law on the Control of the Integrity of Certain Positions in the Justice System, as per the request of the Assembly's Ad-hoc Committee on Vetting in order to establish guidelines, criteria, and procedures for monitoring the integrity of high-ranking officials within the justice system<sup>13</sup>.

Upon completion of work of the Ad-hoc Committee on Vetting within the judicial system, Speaker of the Assembly, Glauk Konjufca, has submitted the constitutional amendments to the Constitutional Court to assess whether they are in compliance with Chapter II of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo<sup>14</sup>. The government on the other hand, should take several actions in the interim period, such as engaging in dialogue with the opposition and non-majority parties, maintaining the dialogue with stakeholders, and involving civil society and academia in the process. These efforts aim to foster a more cohesive political environment and ensure that a wide range of perspectives and expertise are considered in the decision-making process<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, the government should prioritize improving the performance of the rule of law sector in Kosovo by ensuring integrity, impartiality, and efficiency within the sector. These efforts can be approached by eradicating malpractices and politicization that have prevailed within the system for years

### c. The State Bureau for Verification and Confiscation of Unjustified Assets

Confiscation of unjustifiable assets has also been one of the main electoral promises of LVV in order to ensure a more stable and secure environment for the citizens by combating organized crime and corruption due to the increasing trend of this phenomenon and the urgent need to address this issue<sup>16</sup>. The actualization of the confiscation of unjustified assets took place promptly following the establishment of the Kurti I government<sup>17</sup>.

Upon the Assembly's first reading of the draft law on civil confiscation, the Speaker of the Assembly requested from the Venice Commission an opinion of compliance of this draftlaw with the European and international standards<sup>18</sup>. An opinion of the Venice Commission came in June 2022, raising concerns about this law's conformity with the fundamental human rights norms guaranteed by the Constitution of Kosovo and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), directly applicable in Kosovo.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. Available at: [Vendimi për themelimin e Komisionit Ad hoc.pdf](#)

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Justice. Available at: <https://md.rks-gov.net/page.aspx?id=1,15,2927>

<sup>14</sup> Tëvël. "Konjufca takes the Constitutional Amendments for Vetting to the Constitutional Court for Interpretation" Available at: <https://teve1.info/lajmet/konjufca-i-con-ne-kushtetuese-per-interpretim-amandamentet-kushtetuese-per-vettingun/>

<sup>15</sup> Group for Legal and Political Studies. "Vetting in the Judiciary: What should we expect?". Available at: [Policy-Note Vetting-in-the-Judiciary-What-should-we-expect.pdf](#)

<sup>16</sup> European Commission (2022). "Kosovo Report 2022", available at: [\\*Kosovo Report 2022.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> GLPS. [ShenimPolitikash\\_KonfiskimiiPasurisesepajustificueshme.pdf](#) pg.4

<sup>18</sup> European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). "Opinion on the Draft Law N°08/L-121 on The State Bureau for Verification and Confiscation of Unjustified Assets, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 131st Plenary Session (Venice, 17-18 June 2022)". January 2023. Available at: [https://venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2022\)014-e](https://venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2022)014-e)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

The Commission in its first opinion pointed out the necessity to reconsider the idea of establishing the Bureau, the necessity to define the scope of the law, criteria, and conditions for collecting information ex officio, defining more precisely the civil standard of proof of the “balance of probabilities”, protecting human rights<sup>20</sup>.

Upon the engagement of representatives of civil society and international partners such as the EU Office, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, UNDP, and other organizations, in the process of amendment of the initial draft law, the follow-up opinion of the Venice Commission is positive as improvements have been reflected in the second draft. Nevertheless, even in this opinion, the Commission has had some recommendations to be considered during the preparation of the final draft regarding the definition of “unjustified assets”, clarification of the term “public institutions or enterprises” if it covers foreign entities or is limited to those within Kosovo, to establish an evidentiary standard for proceedings, to clarify protection of civil proceedings against criminal proceedings, and consider provision for withdrawing unfounded cases<sup>21</sup>.

On February 9, 2023, the Assembly of Kosovo passed the Draft Law No. 08/L-121 on The State Bureau for Verification and Confiscation of Unjustified Assets in the second reading which is expected to be decreed by the President and published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo<sup>22</sup>. Following its passing in the parliament, Partia Demokratike e Kosoves (PDK) has sent the Draft Law on the State Bureau for Verification and Confiscation of Unjustified Assets to the Constitutional Court, for constitutionality assessment<sup>23</sup>. The Bureau for Verification and Confiscation of Unjustified Assets as an institution is expected to reflect objectivity and focus on the verification and confiscation of unjustifiable assets as a primary approach to the fight against corruption and organized crime.

### c. Organized Crime and Corruption

Kosovo continues to be assessed as being at an early stage in the fight against corruption and organized crime. But, during 2022, respectively the second year of the Kurti II Government, international reports<sup>24</sup> estimate that some progress has been made with the adoption of important anti-corruption legislation. More specifically, during this period, the Assembly approved the new Code of Criminal Procedure, the Law on the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption, the new Law on the Declaration of Assets and the legislation on the financing of political parties. However, there is a need to improve the implementation of the general legal framework. Continued efforts are needed to have more proactive investigations, final judicial decisions and final confiscation of assets.

Also, during the second year of the Kurti II Government, a decision was made to establish the structures for the drafting of the State Strategy and Action Plan Against Corruption, which structures will consist of the Ministerial Commission, the Coordinator and the Working Group and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). “Follow-up Opinion to the Opinion on the Draft Law N°08/L-121 on The State Bureau for verification and confiscation of unjustified assets, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 131st Plenary Session (Venice, 16-17 December 2022)”. December 2022. Available at: [default-2\\_221219\\_201824 \(2\).pdf](#)

<sup>22</sup> Nacionale. “With 66 votes in favor, the Assembly passes the Asset Confiscation Bureau”. Available at: <https://nacionale.com/politike/me-66-vota-pro-kuvendi-e-miraton-byrone-e-konfiskimit-te-pasurise> [Accessed 01 March 2023]

<sup>23</sup> Nacionale. “PDK sends the Draft Law for the State Bureau to the Constitutional Court”. Available at: <https://nacionale.com/politike/projektligjin-per-byrone-shteterore-pdk-ja-e-dergon-ne-kushtetuese> [Accessed 01 March 2023]

<sup>24</sup> European Commission, “Kosovo Report 2022”, December 2022, Available at: [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/kosovo-report-2022\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/kosovo-report-2022_en)



that the implementation of this the strategy will be made by the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption<sup>25</sup>.

Even during this governing year, among the main focuses in terms of the rule of law were the fight against organized crime and corruption. According to PM Kurti, during 2022, 854 police operations against organized crime and smuggling were carried out, of which 3202 people were arrested, of which 301 were public officials. Also, according to him, in the past year, 16 illegal roads were closed in the north of the country, 69 criminal groups were destroyed, more than 1.8 tons of narcotic substances were confiscated, 5 drug laboratories were destroyed in the north of Kosovo, worth hundreds million in substances and equipment as well as 3 laboratories for the production of cryptocurrencies, more than 14 million euros were frozen under the suspicion of misuse and money laundering, and more than 300 thousand liters of fuel were seized that did not conform to the bylaws<sup>26</sup>.

During this period, in the fight against organized crime and corruption, officials have continued to carry out two of the largest operations known as "Subsidies" and "Brezovica", where a large number of public officials are involved in bribery and misuse of official positions. Likewise, the anti-smuggling actions in the northern Kosovo carried out this year have resulted in a significant number of arrests and seized property.

Despite these actions undertaken by the Kosovo Police in coordination with the justice institutions, the lack of sanctions and the low punitive policy against suspects, as well as minimal value of confiscated property by a court decision, remain challenging.

A lack of effective judicial oversight and a general weakness in the rule of law contributed to these problems. Corruption cases continue to be subject to repeated appeals, and the judicial system often allows cases to reach their statutory limitations without any trial held. Also, prosecutors who handled cases of organized crime and corruption often failed because they filed incomplete indictments or made procedural errors during the investigation of the cases.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, during the year 2022, the Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI) report was also published, where it was estimated that Kosovo is the only country with a decrease in corruption cases, in comparison to other countries of the region. SELDI's assessment data suggest that countries that are clear towards an EU perspective perform better in the area of fight against corruption to demonstrate increased efforts for a better rule of law in their respective country. In 2021, the positive trend for Kosovo continued, but not so much for the other countries of the Western Balkans<sup>28</sup>.

In the following years, in addition to criminal investigation and prosecution, the government should focus more on the policy-making aspect regarding the efficient handling of cases of organized crime and corruption by the courts and prosecutors, a more adequate punishment policy towards the perpetrators of these criminal offenses as well as the increase in the amount of confiscated assets which are proven to have been acquired as a result of incriminating actions by the convicted.

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<sup>25</sup> Prime Minister Office, Decision nr.06/130, February 2023, Available at: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Vendimet-e-mbledhjes-se-130-te-Qeverise-compressed.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Dukagjini.com, "Kurti highlights the achievements of the government in fight against organized crime and corruption during 2022". January 2023, Available at: <https://www.dukagjini.com/kurti-numeron-te-arriturat-e-qeverise-kunder-krimet-te-organizuar-dhe-korrupsionit-gjate-2022-tes/>

<sup>27</sup> US Embassy Prishtina, "Human Rights Report 2021". April 2022, Available at: [https://xk.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/133/HRReportKosovo2021\\_Alb.pdf](https://xk.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/133/HRReportKosovo2021_Alb.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI), "Geopolitics, State Capture and Peak Corruption. What is Next for Anticorruption in the Western Balkans?", September 2022, Available at: [https://selidi.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/SELDI\\_Geopolitics-State-Capture-and-Peak-Corruption-1.pdf](https://selidi.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/SELDI_Geopolitics-State-Capture-and-Peak-Corruption-1.pdf)

d. Legislative Agenda 2022 in the Rule of Law Area: Ambitious plan

Nr.	Draft Law	Approved by Government	Approved by Assembly	Published in the Official Gazette
1	Draft Law on Ratification of Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kosovo and Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania for Mutual Legal Assistance in Civil and Commercial Matters;		Approved.	Published on: 30.05.2022
2	Draft Law on Court Experts;	Approved.	The review didn't start yet.	
3	Draft Law on the Special Chamber of the Supreme Court of Kosovo on Privatization Agency Related Matters;	Drafting didn't start yet.		
4	Draft Law on the Ratification of the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Between the Government of the Republic of Kosovo and the Swiss Confederation;		Approved.	Published on: 11.08.2022
5	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing Law No. 05/L-049 on Administration of Sequestered and Confiscated Property, Amended and Supplemented by Law No. 08/L-034;	Drafting didn't start yet.		
6	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing the Criminal Procedure Code No. 08/L-032		Approved.	Published on: 17.08.2022
7	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing the Law No. 06/L-010 on Notary	Drafting didn't start yet.		
8	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing the Criminal Code No. 06/L-074 of the Republic of Kosovo		The review didn't start yet.	
9	Draft Law on Public Property		Approved in the first reading.	
10	Draft Law No. 08/L-132 on the Execution of Criminal Sanctions		Approved.	Published on: 10.08.2022
11	Draft Law on Kosovo Correctional Service		Approved.	Published on: 08.08.2022
12	Draft Law on Kosovo Probation Service		Approved.	Published on: 08.08.2022
13	Draft Law on Administrative	Approved.	The review didn't	

	Conflicts		start yet.	
14	Draft Law on Central Criminal Records System of Kosovo	Approved.	The review didn't start yet.	
15	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing Law No. 03/L-052 on the Special Prosecution Office of the Republic of Kosovo, amended and supplemented by Law No. 04/L-273 and Law No. 05/L-103		Approved in the first reading.	
16	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing Law No.06/L-056 on Kosovo Prosecutorial Council		Approved in the second reading.  It is being reviewed by the Constitutional Court.	
17	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing Law No. 06/L-025 on State Prosecutor;		Approved in the first reading.	
18	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing Law No. 06/ L - 057 on Disciplinary Liability of Judges and Prosecutors, amended and supplemented by Law No. 08/L-003	Being drafted.		
19	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing Law No. 06/L-060 on Forensic Medicine	Approved.	The review didn't start yet.	
20	Draft Law on Targeted Sanctions Against Foreign Human Rights Violators	Approved.	The review didn't start yet.	
	Draft Law on the Institute for the Documentation of Crimes Committed During the War in Kosovo	Approved.	The review didn't start yet.	

## II. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

Albeit the strategic framework that has been established with the approval of the Strategy for the Public Administration Reform (SPAR), there are several significant elements that remain of a high concern, in particular to the legislative framework pertaining to public officials and that on salaries.

In 2021, the government started the process of amending the Law on Public Officials (*hereinafter*: LPO) on the basis of the Decision of the Constitutional Court issued back then, however, amendments proposed surpassed those required by the Court, which resulted with a practically new law given the additional changes proposed. Furthermore, this process took place

without any prior analysis of the existing documents and policies regulating the area so far. Among these revisions, the government changed the whole scope of law, which as proposed, is unclear and ambiguous. The newly proposed scope significantly changes the current job system and work relationship by eliminating the existing permanent contracts with mandated ones for top level positions. In addition, as proposed, it seriously hampers the overall career system of the civil servants, as well as the overall functioning of the public administration. Although this newly proposed draft of LPO was publicly and vocally criticized by the civil society<sup>29</sup>, opposition parties, and various trade unions, these comments were not taken into consideration by the government.

Similarly, unprecedentedly, SIGMA/OECD and the EU Office in Kosovo publicly expressed their concerns with regards to the proposed amendments, which were never considered, as well. Among others, they said that the new approach applied in this law is highly concerning, increases politicization within the public administration, and can encourage corruption during recruitment processes among others<sup>30</sup>. Such a statement from the EU is a clear signal that the newly proposed legal amendments are not in line with the principles of transparency, accountability and efficiency, which remain a precondition for any country that aspires to join the EU, given that those principles are, in a way, requirements that fall under the public administration domain for potential EU members.

The new Law on Public Officials was approved in December 2022, and shortly after, it was again sent at the Constitutional Court, leading to a whole new constitutional challenge for this law. As a result, the Constitutional Court applied a security measure, deciding that this law cannot produce any effects until a final court decision.

#### **a. New Law on Salaries: Ambiguities still existent**

The Law on Salaries that was approved back in February 2019 was declared unconstitutional by a Decision of the Constitutional Court undertaken in July 2020. As a result, in 2021, Kurti II initiated a new draftlaw on Salaries, aiming to put forward a new version that is fully compliant with the Constitutional Court's Decision. It took two full years for the government to propose a new draftlaw on Salaries, resulting with its approval in December 2022, with an accelerated procedure that took place at the Assembly of Kosovo.

According to legal analysis conducted by GLPS, the newly approved Law on Salaries has significant loopholes<sup>31</sup>, to a point that are even more concerning than those in the previous law that was declared unconstitutional back in 2020. Numerous shortcomings were identified, with particular focus on the overall scope of the law, irregular coefficients', lack of transparency, inequality, unjustifiable allowances, etc. More specifically, the new Law on Salaries provides an irregular coefficients' ratio and a huge number of coefficients (136 in total) and their allocation was not proposed on the basis of the main principle that is equal salary for the same job. Ensuring equality among the public sector employees is among the key principles upon which this draftlaw was considered necessary, by ensuring equal pay for the same positions/levels. The government has largely failed in achieving this with the newly adopted Law on Salaries. Although the new Law on Salaries relies on transparency as one of its main principles, it actually has

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<sup>29</sup> Group for Legal and Political Studies, Comments on the Draft-law on Public Officials, October 2020. Available at: <http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Group-for-Legal-and-Political-Studies-Comments-on-Draft-Law-on-Public-Officials.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Public declaration of H.E. Mr. Thomas Szunyog during the High-level Conference PAR Progress Kosovo 2023, held on 21 February 2023, Pristina, Kosovo.

<sup>31</sup> Group for Legal and Political Studies, Comments on the Draftlaw on Salaries in the Public Sector, October 2022. Available at: <http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Group-for-Legal-and-Political-Studies-Comments-for-Draft-Law-on-Salaries-on-Public-Sector.pdf>

fundamental problems when it comes to transparency, in particular. One of the key elements that this draftlaw regulates is the base salary. To achieve this, there is a need for a clear determination of a coefficient and its value. The draftlaw does not address this aspect under the justification that the coefficient should be determined with the annual Law on Budget. This approach seriously undermines the principles of legal certainty and legality, both of them part of the rule of law principles emphasized in the Constitutional Court Decision issued at that time, as well. In addition, with the new Law on Salaries a tendency to increase salary allowances is evident, and what is more, without clear legal criteria or indicators that provide for more discretion in this regard. In this regard, it provides for unclear allowance system. What is more, the period provided for the entry in force of this new law is very short and there is a high risk that determination of coefficients for public officials will have a high margin of errors given that there is no official job classification system in place.

Despite numerous shortcomings, the Law on Salaries is crucial in regulating the salaries of the public sector considering that most of the time, these salaries have been set with internal regulations and decisions which over the years have led to deep inequalities and salary differences within the sector, resulting with a highly fragmented salary system within the public administration. The new Law on Salaries started implementation on February 2023, despite the lack of a proper job classification system, and a large number of complaints filed at the Ombudsperson Institutions which can potentially result with a lawsuit filed by the latter, given the initial negative effects it has produced.

#### **b. Human Resource Management**

The current Law on Public Officials defines a clear career system, stipulating promotion procedures applicable for the internal civil service only, while new recruitments are available solely for the professional level. A novelty brought with the current law was the centralized and grouped recruitment process that supports the efforts for enhanced implementation of meritocracy principle. Nevertheless, this system has not yet started implementation for the central level yet due to several reasons. Considerable delays in establishing professional recruitment commissions and the lack of internal capacities within the responsible departments led to no external recruitment processes within the public sector since 2019. As a result, many public institutions were not able to properly plan and support their personnel needs given that many significant professional positions within the sector remain unfulfilled due to the abovementioned challenges.

In addition, the human resource management within the public administration was also considerably challenged due to downsizing of the government ministries, and the merging of ministries has led to various problems within the public sector. Despite the fact that the government has publicly declared a concluded restructuring process, many ministries that have merged are still functioning separately in practice. In some cases, this resulted with unnecessary expenses with numerous positions being double paid to deliver the same tasks.

On the other hand, there have been several recruitment processes for the senior management positions that took place during this period. These processes were closely monitored by international mechanisms and local civil society that have played a crucial role in applying an additional layer of oversight when it comes to securing principles of meritocracy and transparency. This approach has led to numerous successful recruitment processes for senior management positions, which were later overshadowed by the lack of willingness of the government to appoint successful candidates, despite regular and meritorious processes that took place. The existing legal framework stipulates that in cases the recruiting institution (minister) does not react within a six-month period to appoint the successful candidate, the latter

is automatically appointed to that certain position, this has not been applied in practice. There have been several cases during this second year that a candidate was successfully selected, but was not appointed. This practice has led to a negative phenomenon within the public administration where many senior level positions are still filled with acting positions in majority of institutions, since this government took office back in 2021. This phenomenon is against the law and serves only as a convenient mechanism for the political interests of the government, enabling them to appoint and dismiss “devoted” public officials without any criteria and procedures that ensure meritocracy. Ironically, the main structure that is responsible for the human resource management within the public administration, namely, the Department for Management of Public Officials within the Ministry of Interior, is still held by an acting position.

On the other hand, the existing Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) is minimally applied in practice, despite the fact that it is a clear legal requirement. Furthermore, it lacks proper maintenance, and is not regularly revised considering the systemic problems identified during its implementation.

### c. Service Delivery

During 2022, evident progress was made in the field of service delivery, particularly in terms of the strategic and legal framework. The strategic framework is now complete with the adoption of the Public Administration Reform Strategy and its associated action plan, which emphasize high quality service delivery as a key objective. Another strategic document approved during the reporting period is the Administrative Burden Reduction Program (ABRP) which focuses in simplification, redesign and digitalization. However, the adoption of the Strategy for E-Governance, which is essential for the transition to digital service delivery, is still pending and represents a delay in achieving objectives related to the technical aspect of digitization.

The legal framework for service provision has undergone significant reforms through the adoption of framework laws that aim to streamline processes and reduce administrative burdens, such as the Law on General Administrative Procedure, the Law on the System of Permits and Licenses, and the Law on Inspections. However, certain special laws contain provisions that contradict the abovementioned laws and jeopardize the protection of individuals' rights and interests. The Government has adopted an omnibus draft law to amend and harmonize 43 laws with the Law on General Administrative Procedure out of a total of 230 laws identified as conflicting with the Law on Public Procurement. While some initiatives have been taken by the Office of the Prime Minister to align special laws with the Law on the System of Permits and Licenses and the Law on Inspections, these have yet to undergo public consultation and approval procedures within the Government.

The institutional framework for providing services remains fragile and quite fragmented. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), responsible for developing and implementing policies for the provision of services does not yet have a specialized administrative structure that is responsible for improving services on a daily basis. Similarly, the Office of the Prime Minister is burdened with the task of reforming and improving services, but regular structures that responsible, lack direct responsibility for the reform.

Although all the main laws promote the principle of providing services free of charge, the same does not happen in practice, on the contrary, the provision of services by public bodies is of the same level or more than the private sector itself. The imposition of fees for the provision of services in an unjustifiable manner, in addition to being contrary to the legislation in force, unreasonably restricts access to and receipt of public services. Overall, it can be concluded that although the strategic and legal framework for service provision has been consolidated and



progressed, its practical implementation lacks in meeting the rights and legal interests of citizens and businesses.

#### d. Organisation, Accountability and Transparency

In this field as well, the strategic framework has been established with clear objectives defined in the Public Administration Reform Strategy, focusing on the organization, accountability, and transparency of public administration.

In terms of the legal aspect, the Law on the Organization and Functioning of the State Administration and Independent Agencies (LOFSAIA) and its secondary legislation outline the principles and regulations governing the organization and operation of state administration and independent agencies. This includes an authentic evaluation system for the form. LOFSAIA also stipulates regulations for the types of agencies that can be established and mandates their rationalization and accountability, considering the significant number of agencies in operation and the lack of accountability lines. Additionally, LOFSAIA establishes standards and regulations for the internal organization of state administration and independent agencies.

Although LOFSAIA has been in force for 4 years, its implementation in practice is still minimal. The process of rationalizing agencies, although started many years ago, has made little progress in this regard. During the reporting year, the Law on the first wave of rationalization of agencies and the establishment of lines of accountability was approved, which is a positive step in the reform of rationalism, however, the estimated number of 8 agencies that must be rationalized has been reduced to 4 and for the exclusion of 4 agencies do not have any justification. The draft law for the second wave of rationalization of agencies was also approved in the first reading, which changes the status of only 2 agencies out of 20 that were foreseen in the rationalization plan. The process of rationalization of agencies during 2022, however it has started, has been slow and not significant. Although there was a plan for the rationalization of the agencies which provided for the entire process to be completed within 4 years, which was also a legal obligation under Article 53 of LOFSAIA for this process to be completed by the end of 2021, this process has been slowed down or completely stopped by made questionable the legality of exercising their functions which are not in accordance with LOFSAIA.

Despite being enforced for four years, the implementation of LOFSAIA in practice has been minimal. The process of rationalizing agencies, which began several years ago, has made little progress. During the reporting year, the Law on the first wave of rationalization of agencies and the establishment of accountability lines was approved, which is a positive step towards reforming rationalism. However, the estimated number of agencies to be rationalized was reduced from eight to four, without justification. The draft law for the second wave of rationalization of agencies was also approved in the first reading, but it only changes the status of two out of the twenty agencies planned for rationalization. The process of rationalizing agencies in 2022, though initiated, has been slow and insignificant. Although there was a four-year plan to complete the rationalization process, which was also a legal obligation under Article 53 of LOFSAIA to be completed by the end of 2021, the process has been slowed down or stopped entirely due to questionable legality of some agencies' functions which do not comply with LOFSAIA.

Regarding the overall organization, restructuring of the government itself is a critical part. In this regard, a reduction in the number of ministries began in 2020, but changes occurred in 2021 as well. Despite the fact that three years have passed, there has been no real reorganization of ministries, and most administrative structures continue to operate in parallel, including departments for common services, legal, procurement, human resources, budgeting, and others.

As for accountability, although the legal framework exists for evaluating the performance of agencies, no agency or ministry has yet applied this system in practice. This is largely due to the lack of clearly defined accountability lines, which must be established through a genuine and regular legal process.

The trend regarding transparency remains negative as public consultations on policies and legislation are only carried out as a formality, with no real incentive for the general public to participate in these processes. Furthermore, comments and proposals submitted through the platform for public consultations are not provided with sufficient information or justifications when they are partially or fully rejected, as required by current legislation.

#### **e. Policy Development and Coordination**

In the early stages of March 2023, the Government approved National Development Strategy 2022-2030 (NDS)<sup>32</sup>, a master plan outlining the country's economic, social and political trajectory for the upcoming years. This strategy was complemented by the National Development Plan<sup>33</sup>, an action-oriented approach that aims to actualize the objectives envisioned in the NDS. With the NDS as a blueprint, the Government's strategy is anchored on the principles of the planning system, developed under the Framework for Strategic Planning and Management. The NDS emphasizes four main pillars, namely "sustainable economic development", "equitable human development", "security and rule of law", and "good governance". To ensure the quality control of the plan's execution and facilitate its effective monitoring, it is incumbent upon the Office of the Prime Minister as the responsibility remains with it, to create a mechanism that ensures the effective implementation of the Strategy.

Notwithstanding these significant strides, it is noteworthy that the government's transparency remains limited. While public consultations are regularly organized, there is still room for improvement. Public institutions must expand their channels of promotion and enable inclusive participation to avoid limiting their aim to minimum consultation standards. In addition, it is crucial for public institutions to publish draft proposals on official websites as well as other communication channels and actively seek feedback from non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to engender proactive participation.

Regrettably, the involvement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the public in the early phases of policy development is still inadequate. Likewise, the absence of policy papers, ex ante impact assessments, and ex post policy analyses and assessments of government institutions, particularly ministries, is a matter of concern that needs urgent attention.

In conclusion, The National Development Strategy 2022-2030 represents a crucial milestone in the country's development. However, the Government needs to address the limitations of transparency and accountability and increase public participation in policy development and decision-making.

#### **f. Public Finance Management**

The realm of public finance management has experienced advancements in recent times. The new Public Finance Management (PFM) reform strategy spanning from 2022 to 2026 was

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<sup>32</sup> National Development Strategy 2022-2030, Government of the Republic of Kosovo, March 2023, available at: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/06032023-Strategjia-dhe-Plani-Kombetare-per-Zhvillim-2030.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> National Development Plan 2023-2025, Government of the Republic of Kosovo, March 2023, available at: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/blog/plani-kombetar-per-zhvillim/>



adopted in 2023,<sup>34</sup> serving as the pivotal strategic document in this area as part of the ongoing reforms in public administration. It is worth noting that the development of the Strategy for the Reform of Public Administration and the National Strategy for Development has occurred in parallel with this new PFM strategy, indicating a significant shift towards a more cohesive and integrated approach to public sector reform.

In addition to the PFM strategy, the Government has also given its seal of approval to the Program for Economic Reforms 2023-2025<sup>35</sup>. Nevertheless, it is essential for the Government to publish regular reports on a six-month or one-year basis, detailing the implementation progress of the aforementioned strategies and economic reform programs. The reports issued by the Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfer concerning the annual budget are typically exhaustive, lucid, and encompassing all budget organizations.

The PFM strategy includes public procurement, although there is no specific strategy to this aspect. There has been a positive trend in public procurement procedures with the exception of contract implementation, which remains vulnerable to irregularities and corruption. It is, therefore, imperative for the government to institute robust measures to combat any form of malfeasance and ensure the effective execution of public procurement procedures.

### III. FOREIGN POLICY

The second year of Kurti II saw the government respond to the new geopolitical reality created by the conflict in Ukraine. Kosovo's application for NATO membership was made, along with a request to join the Council of Europe in May and the European Union in December 2022.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, these objectives remain elusive, as the ongoing Kosovo-Serbia dialogue makes it difficult to secure membership in these organizations. Furthermore, recognition from the remaining five EU member states is also lacking, which adds to the challenge. In the second year of Kurti's government, Kosovo faced several significant setbacks in foreign affairs. Despite its efforts, it failed to obtain any new state recognitions, secure membership in international organizations, or achieve visa liberalization.

#### a. Kosovo's Foreign Policy Challenges: Addressing Diplomatic Gaffes and Unfit Leadership

Since taking office, the Kurti government in Kosovo has faced several foreign policy challenges, with some observers describing it as the weakest link in the administration. The country's foreign minister, Donika Gervalla-Schwarz, has been criticized for her inability to manage the complexities of the country's foreign relations, particularly in its quest for state recognition and membership in international organizations.

Gervalla-Schwarz was appointed as Kosovo's Foreign Minister in March 2021, as part of the government led by Prime Minister Albin Kurti. In her role, Gervalla-Schwarz has been tasked with advancing Kosovo's foreign policy goals, which include gaining new state recognitions and membership in international organizations. Since taking office, Gervalla-Schwarz has faced criticism for several diplomatic gaffes. For example, she has been known to tweet wrong flags

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<sup>34</sup> Public Finance Management Strategy 2022-2026, Government of Republic of Kosovo, December 2022, available at: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Strategjia-e-Menaxhimit-te-Financave-Publike.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Program for Economic Reforms, Government of Republic of Kosovo, 2023, available at: <https://mf.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/579CD1AE-3C87-4D9C-BA68-137232AED801.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> DW (2022). Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/kosovo-formally-applies-for-eu-membership/a-64110674>  
Aljazeera (2022). Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/14/kosovo-officially-applies-for-eu-membership-in-symbolic-act#:~:text=Kosovo%20has%20officially%20applied%20for,Konjufca%20in%20the%20capital%20Pristina.>

when referring to particular states, and has not always adhered to protocol arrangements. These missteps have damaged Kosovo's international standing, and have led some to question her fitness for the job.

To avoid further diplomatic missteps, Prime Minister Kurti has sidelined Gervalla-Schwarz and taken a more active role in representing Kosovo's interests abroad. Kurti has made several appearances on international media outlets, including discussions on regional politics in the Balkans and international affairs regarding the war in Ukraine and Russian influence. President Vjosa Osmani has also been enlisted to provide additional support and validation.

However, Kurti's rhetoric has also sparked controversy, with some critics arguing that his statements about a potential war with Serbia have been damaging to Kosovo's already fragile bilateral relationships and its international reputation.

In light of these challenges, there is a growing need for Kosovo's leadership to address its foreign policy shortcomings and to foster stronger relationships with key allies. This includes promoting more effective leadership and diplomatic communication to avoid unnecessary controversies that can undermine the country's progress and stability.

#### **b. Casting Shadows on Kosovo's Diplomatic Efforts: The Money Laundering Scandal Involving Ambassador Berishaj**

In 2022, Kosovo's foreign service was embroiled in a significant financial scandal involving Martin Berishaj, the country's ambassador to Croatia. According to reports, Berishaj was allegedly involved in a money laundering scandal in Slovenia, where he transferred around 600,000 euros from his company MB Consulting bank account in Montenegro to Robert Golob, the chairman of the Freedom Party.<sup>37</sup> Berishaj also failed to declare in his property form that he is the owner of MB Consulting, which is required by law in Kosovo. The Anti-Corruption Agency of Kosovo submitted a criminal complaint against Berishaj in August 2022.<sup>38</sup> Despite the serious allegations, Minister Gervalla has not taken any disciplinary measures against the ambassador and has expressed her trust in him. Likewise, Prime Minister Kurti and President Osmani have shown unwavering support for Berishaj. The government's decision to stand by an ambassador facing such accusations and potentially damaging Kosovo's diplomatic efforts raises questions. The lack of action against Berishaj and the government's support for him casts doubt on the integrity of Kosovo's foreign service and raises concerns about the country's commitment to combating corruption.

Kosovo's foreign policy under the Kurti government has been characterized by efforts to strengthen its regional and international standing, but also by numerous challenges and setbacks. The government's handling of diplomatic incidents, such as the Berishaj scandal, has raised concerns about its commitment to transparency and accountability. The ongoing negotiations with Serbia and Kosovo's EU integration efforts are also complex issues that require careful management and sustained effort.

#### **c. Kosovo's Struggle for Recognitions: Why 2022 Was a Year of Disappointment**

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<sup>37</sup> Kosova Press (2022). "Berishja denies allegations of involvement in the financial scandal in Slovenia" Available at: <https://kosovapress.com/en/berishaj-denies-allegations-of-involvement-in-the-financial-scandal-in-slovenia/>

<sup>38</sup> Kallxo.com (2022). "The Anti-Corruption Agency starts verification of wealth of Ambassador Martin Berishaj". Available at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/agjencia-kunder-korrupsionit-nis-verifikimin-e-pasurise-se-ambasadorit-martin-berishaj/>

Kosovo has been striving to gain new recognitions in the international community for several years. Despite its efforts, the country did not achieve any new recognitions in 2022. The lack of progress on this front can be attributed to a combination of factors.

Firstly, Kosovo's diplomatic efforts have been hampered by ongoing tensions with Serbia, which has been actively lobbying against Kosovo's recognition.<sup>39</sup> Serbia has been urging its allies to withdraw recognition of Kosovo and has been trying to prevent new countries from recognizing it. This has made it difficult for Kosovo to gain new recognitions, as Serbia's influence and pressure have been significant. Second, the internal political situation in Kosovo has also had a negative impact on the country's diplomatic efforts. The country experienced a period of political instability in 2021, which resulted in the formation of a new government in February 2021. The new government has been focused on addressing internal challenges, such as corruption and economic development, and has not been able to dedicate as much attention and resources to diplomatic efforts.

Adding to Kosovo's challenges, even some of the countries that do recognize Kosovo's independence have been reluctant to support its efforts to join international organizations such as the European Union. For instance, Hungary, which recognized Kosovo's independence in 2008, abstained from supporting Kosovo's application for EU candidate status in 2022. This decision was likely motivated by Hungary's concerns about its own relationship with Serbia and Russia, as well as its desire to avoid antagonizing the EU's larger member states.

The recognition of Kosovo by Greece seemed to be very close at one point,<sup>40</sup> as both countries engaged in a lot of delegation exchanges. However, despite these efforts, nothing concrete seemed to happen. Greece has traditionally been an ally of Serbia, which strongly opposes Kosovo's independence. As a result, the recognition of Kosovo by Greece remains a contentious and unresolved issue. Kosovo's failure to gain new recognitions in 2022 highlights the ongoing challenges and obstacles the country faces in the international arena. While the government has made efforts to deepen ties with key allies and promote its cause, ongoing tensions with Serbia, the pandemic, and internal political challenges have all contributed to the lack of progress on this front.

#### **d. EUROPEAN INTEGRATION & DIALOGUE WITH SERBIA**

Stabilization and Association Agreement – SAA remains the keystone to achieve accession to the European Union- EU.<sup>41</sup> Currently Kosovo ranks last among Western Balkan countries in terms of integration. It holds the status of potential candidate, and since Bosnia was granted with candidate status, Kosovo remains the only WB country at the stage of potential candidate. Since march 20221 there has been some progress in terms of EU integration process and related reforms. Yet many flaws and setbacks are accurate in two-years Kurti government.

The robust majority of Lëvizja Vetëvendosje - LVV ensured a political stability which provided a conducive environment and opportunities to implement EU related reforms. In this context some progress has been made in implementing and adopting the EU related reforms and strategic documents. Hence, in August 2021, the government adopted an Action Plan to implement the second phase of the ERA, which was subsequently endorsed by the Assembly in October 2021. In March 2022, the government approved the NIPSAA for the period 2022-2026,

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<sup>39</sup> TRT World (2023). "Serbia rejects recognition of Kosovo as condition to speed up EU Membership" Available at: <https://www.trtworld.com/europe/serbia-rejects-recognition-of-kosovo-as-condition-to-speed-up-eu-membership-61481>

<sup>40</sup> GLPS Interview with Member of Parliament, 13 February 2023

<sup>41</sup> European Commission, "Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Union and Kosovo signed," April 1, 2016

which was endorsed by the Assembly in April 2022.<sup>42</sup><sup>43</sup> The institutional coordination between ministries of line remains a challenge. Albeit, some steps have been taken to strengthen inter-institutional coordination of EU related reforms from the government such as granting the portfolio of EU integration process to the First Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Dialogue and Development, as the highest political appointee.

Nevertheless, there was a lack of substantive reforms that would speed up the EU integration process for Kosovo. For instance, the public administration reform and other related laws to PAR have not been implemented during the two years of Kurti government. Furthermore, it is problematic that the implementation of SAA and ERA still faces challenges. The European Commission has also confirmed the importance of the implementation of the SAA in the process of deepening relations between the EU and Kosovo in the statement dated December 14, 2021, where it emphasized the importance of continuing the implementation of the SAA alongside ERA II as well as the acceleration of reforms by qualifying the progress until now as limited.<sup>44</sup> In the contractual relations between the Republic of Kosovo and the European Union, the Stabilization and Association Agreement remains the key document at the stage in which Kosovo is in the European Integration process. In the implementation of the SAA, the implementation of the National Plan for the Implementation of the Stabilization-Association Agreement - NIPSAA continues to remain in the permanent trend of its implementation, although the last year marks an improvement in relation to its applicability compared to previous years. Based on the GLPS research and monitoring data, the implementation of NIPSAA in 2022 results in implementation of over 50% from 42%<sup>45</sup> as it was in 2021. The slow trend and efficiency of the implementation NIPSAA has influenced the parties to continue with the European Reform Agenda- ERA II, which was approved by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo in October 2021, the fulfillment of which is at the level of 50%, while it is foreseen that it will be fully fulfilled by the end of 2023. Such a trend of implementation of these documents reconfirms the need for a more effective administration, considering that the bearer of these processes are the institutions of Kosovo, while the political spectrum remains a facilitator of the process based on political will and political priorities.

Among other, Kosovo's government declared that by the end of 2022 it will submit a formal application for membership in the European Union.<sup>46</sup> And this promise made in the beginning of the term became reality. A breakthrough in Kosovo-EU relations occurred with the submission of the official application for EU membership. In a rather more a symbolic act, president of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu, prime minister, Albin Kurti and the speaker of the Parliament Glauk Konjufca signed the application for membership on 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2022.<sup>47</sup> On the 15<sup>th</sup> of December prime minister Kurti submitted the bid for EU membership in Prague to the Czech Republic the holders of EU rotating presidency.<sup>48</sup> Kosovo formalized a process that would take years if not decades. Despite long and bumpy way ahead, the decision to apply for membership in the EU was prudent and necessary. In this way, Kosovo has shown determination and commitment to be part of the European Union family with all the responsibilities and the

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<sup>42</sup> Kosovo Country Report 2022

<sup>43</sup> Kosovo's Assembly

<sup>44</sup> European Commission (2021), "Enlargement and Stabilization and Association process – Council Conclusions, December, 2021, link: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/53454/st15033-en21.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Group for Legal and Political Studies monitoring reports on SAA.

<sup>46</sup> Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/arberi/314464/kurti-skemi-date-kur-do-te-aplikojme-per-statusin-e-vendit-kandidat-ne-be/>

<sup>47</sup> Al Jazeera (2023). Kosovo officially applies for EU membership in symbolic act: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/14/kosovo-officially-applies-for-eu-membership-in-symbolic-act>

<sup>48</sup> Reuters (2023). Kosovo submits EU membership application <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/kosovo-submits-eu-membership-application-2022-12-15/>

benefits that this endeavor entails. That said, Kosovo stands better than the majority of WB6 when it comes to freedom of press human rights, freedom of speech, political rights and democracy in general. Also, with its ebbs and flows Kosovo has shown commitment to progress in the field of rule of law and fight against corruption and organized crime.

In reference to the application in EU, Kosovo's government shall develop a constructive and direct dialogue with member states, especially with 5-non recognizers, and with EU institutions in order to receive support in the upcoming steps. In addition, it remains imperative for Kosovo's institutions to perform better on the measures that are stipulated in NIPSA, and ERA I and ERA II. The quest for membership in EU shall not serve for PR stunt, on contrary should serve as a catalyst for EU related reforms to be completed.

Overall, it remains critical for Kosovo's institutions to explore the possibilities offered by the SAA. Therefore, the Kosovo's government needs to take concrete steps to offer short, mid and long-term policy solutions in crosscutting sectors. Alignment with and commitment to the EU policies as well as the implementation of the required measures should be prioritized by the current Government. The progress in all sectors is imperative for accelerating Kosovo's status in the EU. Hence major reforms are needed and substantial in flagging this way.

#### **e. Kosovo's application for membership in the Council of Europe**

Kosovo applied for membership in the Council of Europe – CoE on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2022.<sup>49</sup> This marked a significant shift in the foreign policy domain of Kurti's government because it was the first international organization that this government applied. Secondly, it showed the strategy that Kurti government has in regard to multilateral accession. The submission of the application to the Council of Europe is also a test for the foreign policy of Kosovo. Taking into account the recent history of Kosovo's applications to INTERPOL, and UNESCO which resulted negative in terms of membership, special attention shall be paid in this application.

This government's endeavor has faced some reservation from states who recognize Kosovo, or at least their support has been more cautious. For instance, French Embassy in Belgrade through its ambassador noted that France would not support the Kosovo's application to CoE, while French Embassy in Prishtina had more open stance, yet not showing full support at that stage.<sup>50</sup> However, per the deputy prime minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kreshnik Ahmeti, Kosovo has secured the necessary votes for membership, and also the legal opinion of the CoE has validated the Kosovo's application in terms of its legality.<sup>51</sup> The overwhelming majority of the member states of CoE are countries whom recognize Kosovo, however, the complicated procedural steps and unpredictability in the duration of the membership process is a problem in itself.

Kosovo's application is stalled at Committee of Ministers of the CoE. The Committee of Ministers yet did not transfer the application from the Committee to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – PACE. Should this happen successfully, then would require 2/3 majority of the representatives to cast a vote, and a majority of the representatives entitled to sit at the Committee of Ministers.<sup>52</sup> This stalemate is not a positive indicator in Kosovo's path to the membership. As in other processes this membership is heavy linked with the progress Kosovo

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<sup>49</sup> Radio Free Europe (2022), 'Kosovo applies for membership in the Council of Europe', Available at: <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/nisma-per-anetaresimin-e-kosoves-ne-keshillin-e-evropes-/31845998.html>

<sup>50</sup> France Tweet

<sup>51</sup> Kosova Press (2023), 'Serbia has lost the battle in the Council of Europe', Available at: <https://kosovapress.com/%E2%80%8Bbahmeti-serbia-e-ka-humbur-betejen-ne-keshillin-e-evropes/>

<sup>52</sup> Council of Europe (2023), 'About the Committee of Ministers'. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cm/about-cm>



will make in the dialogue with Serbia. This informal condition is impacting almost every sphere in the foreign affairs, and is not more of a secret now. Thus, Kosovo in the upcoming phases should be more vocal in stating the progress and constructivism that the Government of Kosovo has demonstrated in the EU facilitated dialogue. The acceptance of the EU proposal – Agreement on the path to normalization between Kosovo and Serbia,<sup>53</sup> is a clear indication of that. The decision to apply for membership in the CoE constitutes a new era in the foreign policy domain of Kurti II government. Hence the application was a good government decision which shall be followed with a clear strategy on how to approach every member state. On the contrary, this shall not happen. Membership in the CoE would advance Kosovo's presence in the multilateral mechanisms and would reinforce Kosovo's sovereignty.

#### IV. EDUCATION

The Governing Program of Kurti II – 2021-2025 has evaluated “Education” as an opportunity to develop a sustainable economy and society of Kosovo. In this regard, it has been declared that 6 areas of Education are planned to be reformed and these areas are: preschool education, new textbooks, vocational schools, a scholarship system, free of cost of higher education, and the establishment of a scientific research fund. The mission of Kurti II among others is to: “develop the education, science, and innovation based on quality, inclusiveness access, and accountability”. Following this mission, the main strategic aims and objectives of this Government are: for a period of four-year of governance to build 160 new kindergartens, equal opportunities for children of marginalized groups, quality increase in pre-university education, including capacity building of the Education Inspectorate, digital transformation, quality improvement of university education, drafting the national program of science.<sup>54</sup>

The Education Strategy 2022 – 2026 and its Action Plan<sup>55</sup> were published on 25 January 2023. Even though this Strategy was published in 2023, it includes also activities for the year 2022. However, this Strategy is built upon five main pillars, such as education in early childhood, preuniversity education, education, vocational training and adults education, university education, and education digitalization.<sup>56</sup> In this strategy, the main objectives are to increase inclusion and equal access to early childhood education, improve the quality of pre-university education through the consolidation of quality assurance mechanisms and provision of quality teaching, harmonization of vocational education and training with dynamic developments in technology and labor market, in view of lifelong learning, improve the quality, integrity and competitiveness of higher education, the use of digital technology to improve services and quality in education, in line with digital transformation trends. This Strategy was just approved and published; therefore, we cannot evaluate the implementation.

One of the main objectives planned in the Governing Programme is new school textbooks. According to media reports, around 25 million euros were spent to publish the new school textbooks. However, there were many discussions that the new textbooks have many substantial mistakes not only technical. Many teachers are not satisfied with the quality of these textbooks and in their opinion, they are not suitable for the specific age, and also for example in history

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<sup>53</sup>European Union External Action (2023), ‘EU Proposal – Agreement on the path to Normalization between Kosovo and Serbia’. Available at: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/belgrade-pristina-dialogue-eu-proposal-agreement-path-normalisation-between-kosovo-and-serbia\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/belgrade-pristina-dialogue-eu-proposal-agreement-path-normalisation-between-kosovo-and-serbia_en)

<sup>54</sup> The Governing Program of Kurti II, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Programi-i-Qeverise-se-Kosoves-2021-2025.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Education Strategy 2022-2026 Action Plan, <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/blog/education-strategy-2022-2026-action-plan/> <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/blog/education-strategy-2022-2026/>

<sup>56</sup> Education Strategy 2022 – 2026, published on 25 January 2023,

books there is disinformation regarding factual issues, which can be hurtful for the school students.<sup>57</sup> Even though new school textbooks were published, their quality remains a concern.

Regarding the objective to build 160 new kindergartens, much more needs to be done. The Minister, in a press conference held on February 2023, emphasized that they are facing many problems, not only financial but also related to properties that were to build the objects.<sup>58</sup> Because of this, there is a delay in implementing this objective.

During these two years, the education sector faced a strike crisis. We can call it a crisis since at the time the strike seemed to be never-ending, including kindergartens, primary schools, and high schools. In 2022 schools started with a one-month delay due to the strikes which lasted one month. The strikes had the main request of increasing the teacher's wages by 10.5%, until the approval of the Law on Salaries.<sup>59</sup> The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), on 3 October 2022 issued a press release to inform all the students, teachers, and parents that the next day will start the new school year for all levels of pre-university education. In this press release, the MESTI informed that the reason for this one-month delay was the strikes organized by the United Syndicate of Education, Science, and Culture.<sup>60</sup> With another press release, the MESTI informed about the changes in the school year calendar 2022-2023 including the replacement of lost hours.<sup>61</sup> This decision of the MESTI raised a lot of dissatisfaction among parents who requested proper school time and leisure activities balance for their children. The United Syndicate of Education, Science, and Culture reported pressure made by the Prime Minister to suspend the strike, without discussing and negotiating. Regarding this issue, the United Syndicate of Education, Science, and Culture reported that the European Education Syndicate reacted against the actions of the Prime Minister due to the pressure directed to the director of the Syndicate.<sup>62</sup> The debate was developed mainly among the Government, the United Syndicate of Education, Science, and Culture, and the parents, but the victims in all this situation were our children who missed school and postponed classes, for which the consequences will be seen in the future. The Law on Salaries in the Public Sector entered into force in February 2023, and the teacher's salaries were increased, and this led to a calmer situation for this category.

There was a positive development during the two-year period of the Kurti II Government. In September 2022, Kosovo was granted the status of affiliate in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).<sup>63</sup> Kosovo Accreditation Agency was axed from ENQA in 2019 following accusations of political interference and unprofessional conduct, endangering the recognition of Kosovo diplomas abroad.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, Kosovo Accreditation Agency considered achieving the status of an affiliate in ENQA is an extraordinary achievement, from which will benefit students, graduates, and the academic community since it will have a role

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<sup>57</sup> Koha.net. 6 March 2023. "Over 25 million Euro spent in new school textbooks". Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/368590/mbi-25-milione-euro-u-shpenzuan-per-botimin-e-teksteve-te-reja-shkollore-me-gabime/>

<sup>58</sup> Kallxo.com. 8 February 2023. "Nagavci speaks about the construction of new schools in northern Kosovo and the promise to build 160 new kindergartens". Available at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/nagavci-flet-per-ndertimin-e-shkollave-ne-veri-dhe-premtimin-per-ndertimin-e-160-cerdheve/>

<sup>59</sup> Kallxo.com. 20 September 2022. Available at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/greva-ne-arsim-sbashk-i-gatshem-te-heqe-dore-nga-kerkesa-per-100-euro-kerkon-rritje-te-pages-per-10-5-per-qind/>

<sup>60</sup> Press release, 3 October 2022, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/njoftim-68/>

<sup>61</sup> Press release, 5 October 2023, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/komunikate-49/>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.sbashk-rks.org/index.php/lajme/2447-reagim-i-ashper-i-sindikatave-te-arsimit-te-evropes-ndaj-veprimeve-te-qeverise-kurti>

<sup>63</sup> ENQA membership database, <https://www.enqa.eu/membership-database/kaa-kosovo-accreditation-agency/>

<sup>64</sup> Prishtina insight, Kosovo Accreditation Agency axed from European network organization, <https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovo-accreditation-agency-axed-from-european-network-organization/>

in the process of recognition of graduates' diplomas in European countries. Regarding the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, recently the Draft Law on Kosovo Accreditation Agency was reviewed by the Committee on Education, Science, Technology, Innovation, Culture, and Sports.<sup>65</sup> The draft law was voted on in March<sup>66</sup>, which led to protests organized by the Organization for Increasing Quality of Education (ORCA) since they found that the amendments are made in order to refrain the Agency from its main competencies to set up the criteria for accreditation that KAA sets in accordance with ENQA standards.<sup>67</sup>

The Legislative Programme for the year 2023, approved on 25 January 2023, foresees 6 draft laws to be approved by the Government, such as Draft Law on amending and supplementing the Law No. 06/L -046 on Education Inspectorate in the Republic of Kosovo, Draft Law on amending and supplementing the Law No. 05/L -018 on State Matriculation Exam, Draft Law on amending and supplementing the Law No. 04/L-135 on Scientific-Research Activities and Law No. 06/L-049 on Scientific Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology, Draft Law on amending and supplementing the Law No. 05/L-066 on the Regulated Professions in the Republic of Kosovo, Draft Law on Ratification of the Agreement on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications of Doctors of Medicine, Doctors of Dental Medicine and Architects in the Central European Free Trade Agreement Context, Draft Law on Ratification of the Western Balkans Agreement on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications.<sup>68</sup> The two last-mentioned draft laws were approved on the 127<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Government of Kosovo, with Decision No. 08/127, dated 8 February 2023.<sup>6970</sup> In 2022, three out of five draft laws planned in the Legislative Programme were approved. Draft Law on Textbooks, Teaching Tools and Materials, School Reading Material, and Pedagogical Documentation in Pre-university Education, Draft Law on Early Childhood Education<sup>71</sup>, and the Draft Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo.<sup>72</sup>

Another issue that characterized the Education Sector for this period of time was the Kamenica cases that were sent for evaluation to the Constitutional Court. The Municipality of Kamenica challenged Decision No. 01B/24 of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, of 23 April 2021 due to the violation of the Constitution. The Municipality of Kamenica decided to restructure and reorganize the educational institutions due to the fact that in some schools were fewer than five students in the whole school and a lack of proper infrastructure of educational institutions. The Minister took the decision on April 2023 on the organization of accelerated alternative education for 441 students of the Municipality of Kamenica, on the grounds that this decision is based on the obligation of MESTI. The Constitutional Court found that "Decision No. 01B/24 of 23 April 2021 of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation, was not in compliance with paragraph 2 of Article 12 [Local Government], paragraphs 1 and 3 of Article 123 [General Principles] and paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 124 [Local Self-Government Organization and Operation] of the

<sup>65</sup> Minutes of the Committee meeting, 7 February 2023. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3AM7rm6>

<sup>66</sup> <https://ekonomiaonline.com/komisioni-per-arsim-voton-projektligjin-per-agjencine-e-akreditimit-te-kosoves/>

<sup>67</sup> <https://kallxo.com/lajm/aksioni-i-orca-se-reagon-ardian-gola/>

<sup>68</sup> Legislative Programme for the year 2023, <https://lds.rks-gov.net/DraftLaws/ProgramiLegjislativ?ministry=9>

<sup>69</sup> Draft Law on Ratification of the Western Balkans Agreement on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. Available at: <https://bit.ly/44r6Mo3>

<sup>70</sup> Draft Law on ratification of the Agreement on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications of Doctors of Medicine, Doctors of Dental Medicine and Architects in the Central European Free Trade Agreement Context. Available at: <https://bit.ly/41ZkSvc>

<sup>71</sup> Draft law on Early Childhood education, <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Projektligji-per-Edukimin-ne-Femijerine-e-Hershme.pdf>

<sup>72</sup> Draft Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo, <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/blog/draft-law-on-higher-education-in-the-republic-of-kosova/>



Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo”.<sup>73</sup> This marks a negative point for Kurti II Government since it took decisions violating the Constitution of Kosovo. Also, in the case of KO173/21 the Constitutional Court found that several articles of the Administrative Instruction of the Ministry of Education and Science no. 104/2020 were not in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo.

However, GLPS reiterates that more work should be done for reform in the education sector. The Kurti II Government should make real efforts to fulfill all the objectives given in the Governing Programme, such as building new kindergartens, equal opportunities for children of marginalized groups, quality increase in pre-university education, including capacity building of the Education Inspectorate, digital transformation, quality improvement of university education, drafting the national program of science.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

With an overly ambitious agenda for this mandate, the second year in power was followed by multiple challenges, setbacks, as well as accomplishments in some areas. In general, this second year was shadowed by major challenges in terms of institutional functioning and organization. The phenomenon of high-level positions filled with acting heads continued throughout the second year hampering the overall functioning of the public sector, where in most cases, these positions are exercised even after vastly surpassing all legal deadlines. It should be noted that although half of mandate has passed, the Government is still largely failing to equip the high-level positions, including those of Secretary Generals’ (SGs) in majority of ministries. So far, only four ministries are managed by SGs that enjoy a full and official mandate, while the rest are still with acting positions.

In addition to high-level positions, similarly, there were no external recruitments for the professional level staff since 2019. Furthermore, there have been cases where recruitment processes were successfully concluded, nevertheless, the Government did not put efforts in appointing successful candidates. A perfect example to illustrate this is the position of the Secretary General of the Office of the Prime Minister, where despite having a successful candidate, the OPM did not appoint them. On a similar note, many key institutions were left without their heads for a considerable period due to government’s failure to select and appoint adequate persons, including the Minister of Health, the Police Director, the Tax Administration of Kosovo, as well as various agencies’ boards and executive heads.

Two years after, the Kurti II Government failed to install a proper process of reorganization of ministries that came as a result of downsizing of the government, an initiative of Kurti I back then. Years later, the government was unable to ensure proper restructuring, which might have officially concluded but is largely failing implementation in practice. Continuing past patterns, Kurti II lacks efforts in increasing transparency when it comes to publishing annual work/performance reports. These reports are not available to the public, neither by the OPM, or ministries separately.

Kosovo is estimated to be still at an early stage in the fight against corruption and organized crime. However, during this year, the police operations against smuggling in the north of Kosovo and the "Subsidies" and "Brezovica" cases can be seen as positive signs in the fight against organized crime and corruption. In its second year, the government continued its efforts

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<sup>73</sup> Judgement in Case No. KO145/21 Applicant Municipality of Kamenica, Constitutional review of Decision No. 01B/24 of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, of 23 April 2021, [https://gjk-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ko\\_145\\_21\\_agj\\_ang.pdf](https://gjk-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ko_145_21_agj_ang.pdf)

in pushing further its main reform processes within the rule of law sector, namely, the vetting process and the Bureau for confiscation of unjustifiable assets. On top of this, substantial efforts were also put in amending the legislative framework regulation the prosecutorial system in Kosovo, including the Law on Prosecutorial Council, and the Law on the State Prosecutor.

The second year of Kurti II saw the government respond to the new geopolitical reality created by the conflict in Ukraine. Kosovo's application for NATO membership was made, along with a request to join the Council of Europe in May and the European Union in December 2022.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, these objectives remain elusive, as the ongoing Kosovo-Serbia dialogue makes it difficult to secure membership in these organizations. Furthermore, recognition from the remaining five EU member states is also lacking, which adds to the challenge. In the second year of Kurti's government, Kosovo faced several significant setbacks in foreign affairs. Despite its efforts, it failed to obtain any new state recognitions, secure membership in international organizations, or achieve visa liberalization.

The European Integration process still remains limited within the mechanisms of the Stabilization Association Agreement and the European Reform Agenda - ERA II. Based on monitoring assessments conducted by GLPS, the Government managed to achieve about 50% of objectives stipulated in NPISAA, in comparison to 2021 when this percentage was at 42%. However, the fulfillment of the plans for ERA II and NPISAA still remains at insufficient levels. In this direction, increased institutional coordination between the line ministries in relation to the reforms for EU integration is fundamental.

Regarding the Dialogue process with Serbia, it must be said that throughout the second year, the Government has continued to be proactive in topics and proposals at the dialogue table, and also constructive in terms of readiness for discussions with the parties involved in the process. However, Kurti II continues to fail in ensuring a political consensus with the opposition parties, which falls under their responsibility. There is an evident lack of genuine and regular dialogue with opposition parties regarding this important process. Weeks before marking two years in power, an agreement was reached in principle between the parties in Ohrid for the implementation of the Franco-German Plan. GLPS considers that in principle it is not a bad plan, but it is insufficient in the sense that it does not guarantee *de jure recognition*, although based on what we have seen, it guarantees at least some kind of *de facto recognition* because it includes recognition of symbols, territorial integrity, recognition of diplomas, stamps, license plates and provides for the opening of missions or liaison offices. The EU and the USA must offer some kind of security or mechanism that guarantees that Kosovo will be recognized by the 5 non-recognizers, and positive perspective for membership in important international organizations. Because, at this stage, it is not clear what Kosovo has to gain from the agreement, since it is actually waiving the demand for mutual recognition at the center of the agreement.

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<sup>74</sup> DW (2022). "Kosovo formally applies for EU Membership". Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/kosovo-formally-applies-for-eu-membership/a-64110674>

## **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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