

20

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
Balkans Policy Research Group

21

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2 0 2 1**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

OUR MISSION AND VISION	5
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES	6
REGIONAL COOPERATION	13
LAUNCH EVENT OF THE DIALOGUE PLATFORM	16
YOUTH IN POLITICS	20
2021 POLICY REPORTS AND BRIEFS	22
REGIONAL COOPERATION SET OF PUBLICATIONS	27
COMMUNICATION BY THE NUMBERS	30
BALKANS GROUP'S PLATFORMS	32

## From the Executive Director

---



Dear Friends,

I am pleased to introduce Balkan Policy Research Group's 2021 Annual Report. The following pages provide us with an opportunity to take pride in our organisation's achievements and strengthen our aspirations as we head towards new and more significant frontiers. While we plan for the organisation we want to be in the years ahead, let us

look into some of the defining characteristics that distinguish BPRG from other organisations.

We witnessed an exceptionally challenging year for our country and the world, considering that 2021 will be remembered as a year that brought with itself the shockwaves of the pandemic and many political breakthroughs. Nevertheless, despite the upheaval and the personal toll that the pandemic took on many of us, BPRG has gone through great lengths to stay true to its promise at a time when our work was needed the most. Instead of taking a step back, we expanded our programs and increased our funding to meet our objectives. As such, BPRG further established its reputation as an actor in critical policy areas in Kosovo and the Western Balkans. Together, we grew stronger one signature at a time, as numerous Memorandums of Understanding became highlights of our year, including the Advisory Support for the Northern Serb-Majority Municipalities at national level. These agreements paved the way for us to provide trusted information, policy analysis, and unmatched expertise that today help the government of Kosovo understand and tackle critical challenges.

At BPRG we are made resilient by our people: the visionary researchers, experts, staff, and friends who restlessly commit to help Kosovo and the region reach the highest principles of progress, partnership and harmony. Our policy publications create lasting impact as they are designed to cover urgent issues, inspired from our roundtable discussions and reinforced from the confidence on the values we can add through cutting edge research. Over the years, we've seen that ideas and recommendations stemming from BPRG have come to life as policy implementations. Hence, it is not only critical for us that we provide policy work, we also want to ensure that our ideas serve their purpose in the policy areas of law, dialogue, security, gender politics and regional cooperation among the many areas we cover.

As the Executive Director of BPRG, I want to sincerely thank all my colleagues for making 2021 another remarkable year despite the demanding circumstances. With such a dedicated team, I am confident of our prospect for the future. I extend my gratitude to our partners, the advisory board and all the institutions that have supported and cooperated with us during the year.

Particularly, I thank our strategic partner, the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kosovo for the confidence and the generous support they have placed in BPRG.



**Naim Rashiti**

Executive Director of Balkans Policy Research Group

# OUR MISSION AND VISION

---

For almost a decade our organisation has become an anchor for progressive and high-quality policy research in Kosovo. As an independent, nonpartisan think tank, we are dedicated to influencing policy change in support of democratic consolidation and social cohesion in the Western Balkans. At the centre of our objectives is the achievement of better functioning institutions, resolution of neighbourly disputes, and integration of minorities, ultimately pushing forward the advancement of the EU agenda in Kosovo and the region. Our work has been inspired by a vision of facilitating the development of policy reforms that lead to actual positive societal changes.

This annual report provides a moment to look back on past achievements as we turn to future goals by researching, networking, writing, and providing ground/online events to further our agenda.



# PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

---

Thanks in large measure to the support of our donors and the hard work, ingenuity, and flexibility of our staff and experts, in 2021 we held steadfast to our essential programs and activities: “Inclusive and Accountable Governance”, “Regional Cooperation & Good Neighbourly Relations” and “EU Integration & Policy Change”. Our capacity to bring influential minds together means that our activities reach several strategic goals: to help set the policy agenda, and find pragmatic solutions to political and social impasses. Programs and activities organised by our team throughout the year have helped enrich our research and build the thinking of influential invitees, while offering the space for debate and the chance to reflect on our pertaining goals and issues.



## Inclusive and Accountable Governance

During 2021, this programme was highlighted by the establishment of MoU's with key state institutions in Kosovo such as the Presidency, the Government of Kosovo, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Defence, and other relevant institutions. The creation of such important agreements is invaluable to us, as our Inclusive and Accountable Governance program was built to support reforms and policy changes that favour transparent and accountable good governance and rule of law. By assisting Kosovo's state institutions, BPRG has reinforced the domestic efforts to improve accountability and local ownership of public institutions. Under the roof of this program, among other activities, in 2021 the Alumni Network "Youth in politics" was launched to gather the youth of all political parties that have been a part of our Executive Programme "Youth in Politics: Governance and Political Systems".

## Regional Cooperation & Good Neighbourly Relations

Throughout the years, the full integration of minorities and communities across the region, societal harmony between communities, and peaceful and prosperous relations between the countries of the WB6 have had an important place in our organisation's agenda. Our unmatched track record of working on the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia has been strengthened to larger measures through the launch of the dialogue-info platform, making knowledge about the complex EU-facilitated more easily comprehensible for the ordinary citizen. BPRG aims to address and examine all areas of the technical and political dialogue, the benefits, challenges, and impact towards a final peace agreement. Our organisation not only closely monitors the dialogue and the implementation, but is also engaged in developing and enhancing the support for the dialogue at both policy and societal levels through cooperation with various stakeholders. Large focus has also been put on regional cooperation in 2021, as we hosted conferences, & workshops, published reports, to address the place that Kosovo has in the field of regional cooperation.

## EU Integration & Policy Change

Through this programme, we advocate for the integration of Kosovo and the wider Western Balkans into the EU by encouraging and facilitating the required policy change and reforms within the framework of the accession process. In regards to EU integration as a key policy avenue, our efforts to accelerate the democratic consolidation of institutions and a full reconciliation between states in the WB is as strong as ever. BPRG not only monitored the harmonisation of the legislation with the acquis, but it also provided valuable support to government institutions and policy recommendations in order to advance the reform making agenda.



## **Expert support for the dialogue and the institutions of Kosovo**

---

Numerous MoUs with critical state institutions in Kosovo have been signed, today we provide numerous experts and consultants for key policy areas and priorities in Kosovo institutions, aimed at increasing their capacity, advancing agendas, reforms, and policy processes.

Throughout the year, the appointed experts have provided technical knowledge and expertise on specific issues directly to policymakers. This framework provides policy support for the dialogue with Serbia, law-making and oversight, security, foreign policy, regional cooperation, EU Agendas and reforms, and good governance at national and local levels. Significantly, some policy issues in Kosovo have been regarded as relatively systematic, with well-regulated plans for gradual adjustment, while other problems are seen as contentious matters that require more delicate management. The strengthening of modern democracy in Kosovo can be possible as long as the policymakers are responsive to the views and interests of citizens and stakeholders while implementing sound decisions in consideration of the advice given by experts.

The experts have engaged in short-term strategic and longer-term policy issues with contributions from policy discussions to delivering evidence-informed reports. The policy advice from BPRG goes beyond data analysis and writing to reflect the situation, its main impact is focused on helping our partners to understand the issues and how to respond to them, either in terms of securing the existing order or arguing for a detailed policy change. Our expansion in expert support is all-encompassing, ranging from the local, regional, and national levels. The MoUs mentioned below have been signed as part of our “Elevate peace & state-building agenda and advancing European agenda” project, financed by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prishtina.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to the state institutions for their trust and openness to the advice of our experts.



**Memorandum of Understanding with Government of Kosovo and the Royal Norwegian Embassy - April 2021**

We have contracted several external experts to serve the government, in this case, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister. As such we have made a team of some of the best-known names in Kosovo who possess the expertise in dialogue issues with Serbia in areas of finance, international law or negotiation, or the EU institutions. In the past, various governments in Kosovo have sought such assistance in these matters. Therefore, we have created an easy mechanism to mobilise such a group so that Kosovo's government can fill the gap of experts and shortcomings in dialogue skills.



**Memorandum of Understanding with the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo and the Royal Norwegian Embassy - August 2021**

We have contracted several external experts to serve the government, in this case, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister. As such we have made a team of some of the best-known names in Kosovo who possess the expertise in dialogue issues with Serbia in areas of finance, international law or negotiation, or the EU institutions. In the past, various governments

in Kosovo have sought such assistance in these matters. Therefore, we have created an easy mechanism to mobilise such a group so that Kosovo's government can fill the gap of experts and shortcomings in dialogue skills.



The Ministry of Defense has also received the support of our experts, who have recommended policy approaches for the minister and his cabinet in cooperation with domestic and international institutions and partners. Through this agreement the ministry extends its capacities by the increase of coordination in policy implementation and a more secure source to knowledge and recommendations. At a time of increasing security risks and concerns, the implementation of such an agreement is necessary to help preserve national security. As with the other MoU's the affirmation of mutual objectives is the cornerstone of our expert support component.

## **Expert support for the dialogue and the institutions of Kosovo**

Among several agreements we are proud to have signed this year, is the MoU for supporting the Office of the President of the Republic of Kosovo. As this office is engaged in the implementation of a state-building agenda, many national issues in Kosovo and in regards to foreign policy have grown increasingly more complex. Such obstacles can increase uncertainties, and

it is in our mission to help through expert support as provided by the agreement. Crucial to us is that the Presidency of Kosovo, BPRG and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prishtina share common objectives to engage in the process for peace and statebuilding while remaining committed to furthering the EU agenda. The Presidency of Kosovo through the expert support provided by us can make more sound decisionsmaking to shape its foreign policy agenda accordingly to problems as well as the opportunities that are given.

## **Expert support for the dialogue and the institutions of Kosovo**

---

The activity was aimed at enhancing cooperation with the government and CSOs on the dialogue with Serbia by organising a roundtable with Deputy Prime Minister Besnik Bislimi and leading Civil Society activists. This roundtable was organised according to the Chatham House rules.



## **The new Government Agenda and Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue**

---

This event was organised by another roundtable on the new government's agenda with civil society representatives. The discussions were focused

mainly on civil society representatives posing questions to the Deputy Prime Minister on their new course of action. Such events are important as they help identify the possible path that this process might take and recommend new approaches and solutions for the government to follow. This roundtable was organised according to the Chatham House rules.



## **Kosovo in the Dialogue process with Serbia**

This event was organised by another roundtable on the new government's agenda with civil society representatives. The discussions were focused mainly on civil society representatives posing questions to the Deputy Prime Minister on their new course of action. Such events are important as they help identify the possible path that this process might take and recommend new approaches and solutions for the government to follow. This roundtable was organised according to the Chatham House rules.





# REGIONAL COOPERATION

We believe that our region is a place where dialogue and the benefits of cooperation can bring forth tremendous positive changes for increased freedom and mobility, a Western Balkans rich in culture, where the interconnectedness makes the citizen feel safe and prosperous. This is why BPRG is always on the lookout for opportunities to consolidate Kosovo's participation and membership in regional organisations and initiatives, as well as to address the challenges that hinder its position in regional fora. In 2021, we organised numerous roundtables and events to bring together diverse stakeholders to contribute through their viewpoints on strengthening the role of Kosovo in the map of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. One of our strongest motivators for engaging in this area of work is the Stabilisation and Association Process, which identifies regional cooperation as an essential element for the integration of Kosovo in the EU.

In 2021, we brought together government representatives, field experts, and diplomatic staff in Kosovo, as the main actors that push for the change needed to give Kosovo its rightful place in the regional cooperation arena. BPRG ran a series of events throughout the year, with high-profile speakers offering early insights into the wide-ranging challenges in Kosovo and the region, with speakers including: Ms. Donika Gërvalla Schwarz, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, German Ambassador to Kosovo H.E. Jorn Rohde and Ms. Rozeta Hajdari, Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, and others who we thank for bringing their views on Kosovo's participation and representation in regional cooperation mechanisms.

## Roundtable on “Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans and Kosovo’s participation in regional organisations: Identifying the best ways to approach regional cooperation in the Western Balkans”

We believe that our region is a place where dialogue and the benefits of cooperation can bring forth tremendous positive changes for increased

freedom and mobility, a Western Balkans rich in culture, where the interconnectedness makes the citizen feel safe and prosperous. This is why BPRG is always on the lookout for opportunities to consolidate Kosovo’s participation and membership in regional organisations and initiatives, as well as to address the challenges that hinder its position in



regional fora. In 2021, we organised numerous roundtables and events to bring together diverse stakeholders to contribute through their viewpoints on strengthening the role of Kosovo in the map of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. One of our strongest motivators for engaging in this area of work is the Stabilisation and Association Process, which identifies regional cooperation as an essential element for the integration of Kosovo in the EU. In 2021, we brought together government representatives, field experts, and diplomatic staff in Kosovo, as the main actors that push for the change needed to give Kosovo its rightful place in the regional

cooperation arena. BPRG ran a series of events throughout the year, with high-profile speakers offering early insights into the wide-ranging challenges in Kosovo and the region, with speakers including: Ms. Donika Gërvalla Schwarz, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, German Ambassador to Kosovo H.E. Jorn Rohde and Ms. Rozeta Hajdari, Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, and others who we thank for bringing their views on Kosovo's participation and representation in regional cooperation mechanisms.

Aware of Kosovo's shortcomings in regional initiatives, we brought together the main actors to push for the change needed to build a solid internal institutional framework and coordination for increasing Kosovo's participation and representation in many regional cooperation organisations and initiatives. The need to strengthen the institutional framework and coordination for increasing Kosovo's participation in regional cooperation has been identified by the main findings of BPRG's series of reports. Our reports focus on Kosovo's standing in regional cooperation organisations and initiatives by identifying key challenges and providing a set of concrete actions to be undertaken. Under the framework for regional cooperation, we gathered government representatives, government officials/contact points of regional cooperation organisations, national staff at regional organisations in Kosovo, and experts on the field. The existing structures do not suffice, especially when the regional cooperation agendas in the region are continually expanding. Hence, during this two-day workshop, the participants worked at identifying institutional roles, responsibilities, as well as manualizing the inter-institutional coordination for monitoring and implementing regional cooperation agendas.





## Milestones of the Kosovo - Serbia Dialogue



*Being informed,  
instead of just opinionated!*

The Dialogue Agreements

### Latest



25.02.2022

Meetings of the Working Group on License Plates



25.02.2022

February 2022 talks between Bislimi and Petkovic



01.11.2021

New agreement on vehicle car plates

# LAUNCH EVENT OF THE DIALOGUE PLATFORM

**DIALOGUE-INFO.COM**

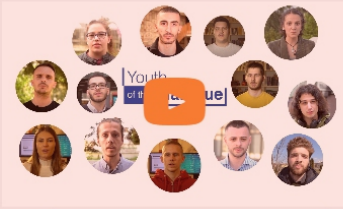
From the beginning of the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, the process has been criticised for the lack of transparency and accountability. Many citizens in both countries have created certain opinions on the process and the achievements of the dialogue without having enough context over

the actual agreements, this came mostly from the biased reporting in the media on the issue of the dialogue. In order to fill the massive gaps that exist in the society as a result of inappropriate information for the dialogue, BPRG has created the dialogue-info.com platform with the goal of becoming everyone's primary source of information, for this process.

BPRG held the launch event for the dialogue-info.com in March in a ceremony which gathered civil society representatives and youth, where we spoke about the importance of this platform, as a project supported by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Pristina as a project that aims to inform the wider public about the process of the Kosovo- Serbia dialogue. We do this by presenting the dialogue events, agreements, and its implementation in a more condensed manner, focusing on providing visualised information that is easy to grasp for the public. It is important to us to take across positive messages about processes that are positive for the future of the region. Through Friends of Dialogue we amplified the calls for increased support for a dialogue that is more effective, challenging the low public support that the process has had since the beginning. "Friends of the Dialogue " became a strong part of BPRG's digital advocacy campaign, as we aim to promote the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia and its societies through influential voices in both countries.

The campaign involved prominent personalities in Kosovo and Serbia who genuinely support the dialogue process. Their involvement, in fact, is considered the best way to reach out to the audience to influence the negative connotations that accompany the process and to -potentially- change the narratives regarding the dialogue and its benefits on both sides. The thoughts and opinions of the speakers in the Friends of the Dialogue section are highly valued in their respective countries and perceived. Such direct messages of support for a sensitive process for the general public will help bring down the controversies and encourage those in favour of the dialogue to voice their support.

"Friends of the Dialogue" is a digital advocacy campaign that aims to promote the dialogue between the two states (Kosovo and Serbia) and societies. Through this activity, BPRG promotes stronger public voices in support of the Kosovo- Serbia dialogue, considering the low public support that the process has had since the beginning. The campaign involves prominent personalities in Kosovo and Serbia who genuinely support the dialogue process. Their involvement, in fact, is considered the best way to reach out to the audience to influence the negative connotations that accompany the process and to -potentially- change the narratives regarding the dialogue and its benefits on both sides.



Youth of the Dialogue



Petar Matic



Nina Lazarević

It is important to us to take across positive messages about processes that are positive for the future of the region. Through Friends of Dialogue we amplified the calls for increased support for a dialogue that is more effective, challenging the low public support that the process has had since the beginning. "Friends of the Dialogue " became a strong part of BPRG's digital advocacy campaign, as we aim to promote the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia and its societies through influential voices in both countries.

The campaign involved prominent personalities in Kosovo and Serbia who genuinely support the dialogue process. Their involvement, in fact, is considered the best way to reach out to the audience to influence the negative connotations that accompany the process and to -potentially- change the narratives regarding the dialogue and its benefits on both sides. The thoughts and opinions of the speakers in the Friends of the Dialogue section are highly valued in their respective countries and perceived. Such direct messages of support for a sensitive process for the general public will help bring down the controversies and encourage those in favour of the dialogue to voice their support.

Part of our motivation to create the dialogue-info platform included the idea to design a Blog section which is designated to provide the readers with a selection of quality op-eds, in a space that regularly hosts significant voices that influence the public opinion on the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. Through the year, this section of our platform amplified voices from both Serbia and Kosovo. The published reads, written from critics who have observed the dialogue from different angles, enrich the platform by encouraging a spirit of critical thinking for the public. While each author has offered a distinct view on the priorities and approaches regarding the process, the idea of continuous dialogue with the end-goal of a peaceful resolution of disputes remains steadfast.



**Kosovo-Serbia dialogue:  
A catch-22 or a dead-  
end**

Astrit Istrefi



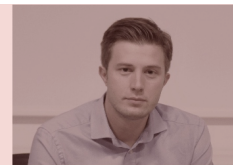
**Serbian political  
conundrum in 2022 – no  
Brussels Dialogue on site**

Dušan Milenković



**On the 9th Anniversary  
of the First Agreement of  
Principles Governing the  
Normalisation of  
Relations, a second and  
final agreement  
between Kosovo and  
Serbia is not on the  
horizon**

Violeta Haxholli



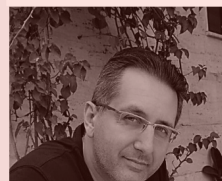
**A new framework for the  
old dialogue**

Stefan Surlić



**Broken promises and  
what is the Dialogue  
about**

Milica Andrić Rakic



**Water Resource  
Opportunities at Lake  
Gazivode/Ujman**

Robert Muharremi



**Education – the ideal for  
interethnic integration**

Rinor Qehaja



**The dialogue – a tool to  
enhancing the regional  
economic cooperation**

Sytrime Dervisholli



# YOUTH IN POLITICS

Despite making up about half of the population in Kosovo, the youth often finds itself disempowered from mainstream politics and its conduct within the country. BPRG continued to extend its support for future changemakers to transmit their energy, creativity, and goals as they undertake their journey to become political leaders and shape the fabric of our society. Our work in this aspect has been intensive during 2021, as three editions of the Executive Training Program “Youth in Politics: Governance and Political Systems” were organised where 130 participants benefited from this program consisting of 5 modules and three local study visits.

This Executive Program aims to train and build the capacities of young people that are active in political parties in Kosovo in areas such as rule of law, public policy, good governance, economic development, and social policies, education policies, regional cooperation.

By gathering the youth of all political parties, this program serves as a platform for equipping youngsters with knowledge in these specific areas that serve well in their everyday work and empower them within the political subject they belong to.

The “Youth in Politics” component is part of the multi-pillar project “Elevate peace & state-building agenda and advancing European agenda”.

## Youth in Politics Alumni Network launching

While the “Youth in Politics” program brings together young professionals who are engaged through their work and goals to become part of the policy-making scene in Kosovo. The establishment of an alumni network is made to ensure that the participants benefit from this program beyond the training days. Youth in Politics Alumni Network establishes everlasting connections made through networking and friendships, a group of young professionals that in their common goal have the betterment of the community which they live in.

Within the Alumni Network framework, we will continue to hold different activities, and to engage more with the youth by:

Holding webinars with different topics such as the importance of Regional Cooperation, Inclusive and Accountable Governance, and EU integrations.

Creating the opportunity for internship of youngsters in local/national institutions

Developing the Alumni Network Facebook Group to inform the youngster about activities and share opportunities for jobs, and internships.



# **2021 POLICY REPORTS AND BRIEFS**

---

This Annual Report presents our research outcomes and provides evidence of the objectives and the stance of our organisation. We are convinced that high academic standards are facilitative of our high-quality policy recommendations. All policy papers published by our organisation, therefore, undergo a collective feedback process within our research team. It is of great importance that our policy papers always remain openly accessible to the wider public and are regularly shared through our communication channels with the public. This ensures that the work we publish can be accessed by citizens, institutions, and partners.

18 January 2021

**KOSOVO'S CONSTITUTIONAL COURT REVIEW AND SNAP ELECTIONS:  
LEGAL ANALYSIS, AND SCENARIOS****SUMMARY**

In late 2020, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo found that the election of the government of Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti, six months after it was elected, did not receive a majority following the invalidity of one of the 61 votes in the 120-seat Assembly of Kosovo. The vote in question was cast by Member of Parliament (MP) Etëm Arifi who had been found guilty on a fraud charge prior to the elections. The Constitutional Court ruling published on 6 January 2021 forced early elections to be held within 40 days—the Acting President set the date for the elections on 14 February 2021.

Hoti, the Hoti government was in a crisis even before the Court's ruling with severe disagreements between coalition partners and a lack of a working majority in the Assembly. The LDK-led coalition with AAK and NSMA (and ethnic minorities) was unlikely to secure votes for the election of the President. Just before its dissolution, the Assembly managed to pass the 2021 Budget.

Currently, Kosovo is in an institutional vacuum, with an Acting President (also Chair of the Assembly), a dissolved Assembly and a caretaker government.

The Acting President, Vjosa Osmani will run for elections and has announced the formation of a new political initiative which presents a legal challenge to the position of "representing the unity of people". If elected, the Presidency would be vacant, and an institutional void would prevail until the Assembly elects the new Chair. In all circumstances, the mandate of the Acting President will come to an end on 8 May 2021.

The Constitutional Court's ruling may also potentially affect several prominent members of Vetëvendosje, including its leader Albin Kurti, who were found guilty and handed suspended sentences. The battle will likely continue as political parties may request further legal reviews for the right to be a candidate for MP and possibly even appointed as Prime Minister.

Many steps en route to the creation of new institutions are likely to be challenged at the Constitutional Court, possibly dragging the process further and questioning

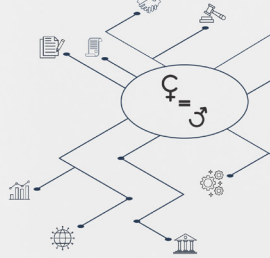
## Kosovo's Constitutional Court Review and Snap Elections: Legal Analysis, and Scenarios

This article outlines the possible scenarios following the ruling of the Constitutional Court which found that the election of the government of Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti did not receive a majority following the invalidity of one of the 61 votes in the 120-seat Assembly of Kosovo. The Constitutional Court ruling published on 6 January 2021 forced early elections to be held within 40 days and the date has been set for 14 February 2021.

The article illustrates the upcoming calendar and the road to the election of a new president and the formation of the government. To avoid a lengthy crisis and new cycles of elections, the political parties should support the electoral process, avoid dragging the counting and recounting and take immediate steps to swiftly form the new institutions. The election of the President will require consensus and cooperation between key political parties in the new Assembly.



## Women in Politics II: Gender responsive policy-making at the local and national level



August 2020

## Women in Politics II

The article on Women in Politics presents data on women's representation in local institutions and enterprises. Following the deep gender gap in politics and governance at the central level, an under-representation of women is evident at the local level as well, where men hold all but a few leading positions. The numbers that show the massive gender gap in all municipalities are a call for concern and for immediate action. Due to the unsatisfactory situation, the report also offers recommendations on the legal changes that are much needed and other affirmative measures that must be taken.

June 2021

**ALBANIA: IMPEACHMENT OF THE PRESIDENT, SUBJECT TO THE MEANING OF "SERIOUS VIOLATION"****Analysis and Scenarios**

The impeachment of President Ilir Meta has caused quite a vortex in Albania. All attention is now turned to the Constitutional Court, as it will have the final word on whether President Meta will be dismissed or will remain in office. The Court will also need to determine the meaning of the "serious violation" of the Constitution, in the absence of a constitutional and legal definition. What will happen after the ruling is quite uncertain as well. Different scenarios might work, while the whole process will be a remarkable political and legal challenge.

**SUMMARY**

On 9 June 2021, the Parliament of the Republic of Albania impeached President Ilir Meta.<sup>1</sup> This is the second time the Socialist Party attempts to dismiss the President; in 2019, MPs from the Socialist Party accused President Meta of violating the Constitution by cancelling local elections, and an Inquiry Commission was established to investigate and report on its findings. Before issuing its report, the Inquiry Commission requested an opinion from the Venice Commission. The Commission concluded that although the President had exceeded his constitutional competences by cancelling local elections, his violations may not meet the established criteria for an impeachment.<sup>2</sup> This time, the allegations are not related to any concrete legal act issued by the President. Instead, the accusations refer to the President's various statements made prior to and during the general elections.

104 out of 122 MPs voted in favour of the President's dismissal.<sup>3</sup> The latter denied all accusations, insisting on the lack of legitimacy of the Parliament to do so.<sup>4</sup> On 14 June 2021, the Parliament forwarded its decision to the Constitutional Court, which shall rule on the impeachment, within 3 months. While it is clear that the Constitutional Court may either rule against the impeachment, or

<sup>1</sup> U.S. News, "Albanian Parliament Impeaches President for Vote Comments", 9 June 2021, at <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021/06/09/albanian-parliament-impeaches-president-for-vote-comments>

<sup>2</sup> Venice Commission Opinion, 14 October 2019, at [https://www.venice.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/documents/default.asp?DocID=C0-AC2019\(01\)13](https://www.venice.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/documents/default.asp?DocID=C0-AC2019(01)13).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. News, "Albanian Parliament Impeaches President for Vote Comments", 9 June 2021, at <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021/06/09/albanian-parliament-impeaches-president-for-vote-comments>.

<sup>4</sup> In February 2019, MPs from the Democratic Party and the Socialist Movement for Integration gave up their mandate, while trying to overthrow the government. Until then, the Parliament has been functioning with 122 out of 141 MPs, whereas the absolute majority are supporters of the Socialist Party. The President and his supporters claim that such composition of the Parliament leaves the latter with no political or moral legitimacy to initiate the dismissal. Moreover, Meta argues that the current Parliament is in a post-election transition period, with its mandate ending in September 2021, which is why it is not eligible to conduct any investigation activities.

## Albania: Impeachment of the President, subject to the meaning of "serious violation"

The article "Albania: Impeachment of the President, subject to the meaning of "serious violation", analyses and outlines the potential scenarios following the impeachment of President Ilir Meta, voted in the Parliament of Albania on 9 June 2021. This unprecedented case is now subject to judicial review by the Constitutional Court.



## **Kosovo and Israel: A long waited recognition**

The policy report ‘Kosovo and Israel: A long-awaited recognition’. Recognition of states and territories in contemporary international politics’ focuses on Israel’s recognition of Kosovo as a long-anticipated recognition, which was welcomed in Kosovo and yet provoked reactions and dilemmas in the international spectrum. This report is of a distinct character, combining political and legal analysis on the recognition of states and territories. Kosovo’s decision to open an embassy in the contested city of Jerusalem, in March 2021, furthered the debates on the topic and it represented a critical test case for Kosovo’s challenging foreign policy. The report identifies numerous ways in which Kosovo can build upon newly established diplomatic relations with Israel and recommends ways for redefining its foreign policy and service.



# REGIONAL COOPERATION SET OF PUBLICATIONS

---

## Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans

---

The policy report “Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans” presents a comparative analysis of the Regional Economic Area, the so-called

“mini-Schengen” and the Common Regional Market.

Many regional initiatives have been built up in the Western Balkans over the past years, and they continue to pop up every few years. However,

their structures remain weak, vulnerable to political shocks and occasional breakdowns, and they bring very limited change to regional cooperation and benefits for the citizens of all countries. Among the many regional initiatives, the most debated have been:

1. **The Regional Economic Area (REA)**
2. **The so-called “mini-Schengen”**

### **The Common Regional Market (CRM)**

The Western Balkans will have to work on many fronts, including resolving bilateral issues and improving relationships with one another, as the main prerequisite for progress on regional cooperation. In addition, implementation capacities will need to be improved and regional cooperation will need to be higher on the policy agenda for the governments of Western Balkans countries.

## **Kosovo’s Contested Representation in Cefta – A Political and Legal Overview**

The new BPRG policy analysis “KOSOVO’S CONTESTED REPRESENTATION IN CEFTA – A Political and Legal Overview”, provides a detailed analysis of Kosovo’s challenges in CEFTA. Paradoxically UNMIK still represents Kosovo in CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement). The Government of Kosovo shall develop a proactive approach with a set of concrete actions to gain support for initiating the removal of UNMIK from CEFTA.

## **Kosovo in Regional Initiatives: Institutional Framework and Coordination**

The policy report “Kosovo in Regional Initiatives: Institutional Framework and Coordination” provides a detailed analysis of Kosovo’s challenges to represent itself and participate in regional organisations and initiatives.

This policy report aims to reflect on Kosovo's institutional framework for multilateral regional cooperation of WB6 and beyond, including the South-Eastern Europe geographical area. It focuses on Kosovo's institutional roles, responsibilities, and method of work, as well as on inter-institutional coordination for coordinating, monitoring, and implementing regional cooperation agendas. Subsequently, this analysis depicts key institutional gaps and challenges that have hindered and delayed Kosovo's full-fledged participation in regional cooperation.

## **Kosovo's Participation and Representation in Regional Organisations – Mapping the gaps and opportunities**

---

The policy report “Kosovo's Participation and Representation in Regional Organisations – Mapping the gaps and opportunities“, provides detailed guidelines for Kosovo's governmental institutions, by providing them with a clear overview of Kosovo vis-à-vis other WB6 countries' level of representation in regional cooperation organisations. The document distinguishes organisations in which Kosovo is a full member and those in which it is not a member. It gives comprehensive information about each organisation's areas of work, governance structure, and recruitment procedures. Finally, the manual aims at giving recommendations on how to boost Kosovo's representation in each of the regional organisations of which Kosovo is a member, and target those that it is not a member of yet.

# COMMUNICATION BY THE NUMBERS

---

It is in our mission to convince policymakers to embrace our recommendations and for the public to be inspired from the research and activities our organisation brings forth. This is why our outreach strategy is of fundamental importance, as we seek to give BPRG its critical role in public debates. Through social media, blogs, written & online media, and interviews on television channels, our organisation has carved out an area for policy discussion in Kosovo. In light of our efforts to spread our word on policy making, 2021 was one of the most successful years, as we reached millions in audience through our communication strategy.

We remain proud to have a diverse target audience that is all-encompassing, as all information and published content from our organisation is accessible and promoted to all age groups, ethnic backgrounds and genders.

**2,533,900**

**People reached through our Articles, Videos, Albums,  
and statuses we shared throughout social media.**

**209,600**

**People reached on Instagram,  
stories and ads.**

**1,434,800**

**Targeted Audience through ads in main media outlets in  
Kosovo to promote the Dialogue-info Platform.**

**84,200**

**Visitors on the official website of  
Balkans Group**

In line with the communications strategy, our promotion campaign was also focused in communicating our activities in three languages (Albanian, English and Serbia), through online media outlets (gazetaexpress.com, gracanicaonline.info, reporter.net, telegrafi.com) and local TV channels (KTV, RTK, T7 and Klan Kosova in Albanian and RTK 2 in Serbian).



## BALKANS GROUP'S PLATFORMS

**The Kosovo Serbia Policy Advocacy Group** (a forum for Cross-Border Civil Society Cooperation) aims to communicate, promote and enhance dialogue toward full normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia and their societies.



**Women in Politics** promotes the empowerment of women and girls; their security and inclusiveness; and is committed to strengthening the Women Caucus' impact and reach throughout Kosovo.



**Youth in Politics – Youth Alumni** is an executive training program for youth involved in public policy, top politics, governance, and regional cooperation. The program aims to increase the involvement of youth and their forums within political parties.



Women in Politics promotes the empowerment of women and girls; their security and inclusiveness; and is committed to strengthening the Women Caucus' impact and reach throughout Kosovo.



**Expert Support Component** aims to provide experts to support the institutions in the field of dialogue, legislation, regional cooperation, as well as the accountability and transparency of the government and municipalities.



**The Policy Forum (a Think-Tankers High-level Advocacy Forum)** is committed to enhancing the dialogue between civil society and institutions.



**Green & Digital** is a new component that BPRG is implementing. We are determined to push forward the Green Agenda, raise awareness over the issue of climate change and create more eco-friendly and sustainable solutions to everyday problems in the region by promoting ecological citizenship with institutions and norms of governance.



**Progress BAR** is an instrument that measures the progress throughout (8) dimensions: “Rule of Law”, “Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”, “Democratizations”, “Economic Development”, “Sustainable Development”, “Education”, “Public Health” and “Good Neighborly Relations”.



**The Dialogue Platform** promotes the dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia by informing the wider public and generating debate about the agreements, benefits, and challenges of the Dialogue.



**“Friends of the Dialogue”** campaign is a digital advocacy campaign that aims to promote the dialogue between the two states (Kosovo and Serbia) and their societies. Through this activity, BPRG amplifies the public voices in support of the Kosovo- Serbia dialogue, considering the low public support that the process has had since the beginning.



The Balkans Policy Research Group is an independent, regional think-tank based in Pristina, Kosovo. We provide timely policy analysis and recommendations on a wide array of state building issues; institutional and democratic consolidation; minority integration and good neighborly relations: European integration and policy change. We have decades of experience in policy reporting and development, strategic thinking and advocacy with governmental, international and non-governmental organizations.

Our rigorous, detailed, impartial reporting, always based on in-depth fieldwork, is the core of our work. We go beyond mainstream positions and seek to make change through creative, feasible, well-measured and forward-looking policy recommendations with the aim of helping develop strong, vibrant democracies, prosperous states and societies based on rule of law in the Western Balkans.

We engage in high-level advocacy, domestically, regionally and internationally, impacting policy discussions and options with regard to the home affairs and European policies toward the Western Balkans.

Balkans Group has developed other tools and platforms to achieve this change:

**The Policy Dialogue** promotes Kosovo's domestic dialogue, cohesion and reform-making agenda.

The Policy Forum (a Think-Tankers High-level Advocacy Forum) committed to enhancing the dialogue between the civil society and the institutions.

**The Kosovo Serbia Policy Advocacy Group** (a forum for Cross-Border Civil Society Cooperation) that aims to communicate, promote and enhance dialogue toward full normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia, and their societies.

**Women in Politics** promotes the empowerment of women and girls; their security and inclusiveness; and is committed to strengthen the Women Caucus' impact and reach throughout Kosovo.

**Youth in Politics** promotes an active participation from youth from different political parties in the institutions. This component helps in developing a culture of dialogue and cooperation, by providing capacity building trainings on key policy areas and skills and leadership.

**The Dialogue Platform** promotes the dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia, by informing the wider public and generating debate about the agreements, benefits and challenges of the Dialogue.

**Expert Support component** provides policy support to the government and key institutions on key policy areas, peace and state-building agendas.