

# An Outlook for 2026: Time for Kosovo to Look Ahead

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## An Outlook for 2026: Time for Kosova to Look Ahead

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## AN OUTLOOK FOR 2026: TIME FOR KOSOVA TO LOOK AHEAD

*“More is lost in indecision than wrong decision”*

Cicero

Historians looking back at the political discussions of the 2025-26 electoral cycles could be baffled by the lack of urgency in the general rhetoric. While world-changing wars were taking place in the relative vicinity of the country, its politicians were engaged in ceaseless discussions over who bore the blame for repeated elections. Very little discussion on a governance program while presenting no vision for the future whatsoever. Therefore, in this paper, we aim to present a diagnosis of the current situation, discuss the costs of repeated elections, and defend the case for a quick institutional setup to achieve some of the most strategic goals. To that end, the first section will delve into a short history of the events that resulted in three national elections in 18 months, the second section will state the most important goals to be followed, such as attaining candidacy status for membership in the EU, while the third section will elaborate on some of the scenarios that can follow the June 7th elections.

### 1. *Annus Confusionis*: 2025 as a year of crisis of inertia

The elections of 9 February 2025 were promising for Kosova since it had its first ordinary elections since the declaration of independence in 2008.<sup>1</sup> In the past 4 years, the ruling Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV) had enjoyed a comfortable majority in the Assembly, which was able to adopt most of the laws while the government continued to use its executive powers. Nonetheless, the

elections produced a hung parliament, with LVV gaining 48 mandates, while the opposition parties gathered 52, with the remaining 20 going to the guaranteed seats for non-majority communities. While technically the opposition could create a government to unseat Kurti, the lack of coordination between parties, combined with the fluctuating position of Nisma, commanding the loyalty of three MPs, provided for a parliament that could not even be constituted, let alone discuss a new government.<sup>2</sup>

After months of unsuccessful attempts, President Vjosa Osmani dissolved the Assembly was on 20 November, with the new elections to be held on 28 December 2025.<sup>3</sup> Kosovar Assembly paused its work on 9 January and was not fully constituted until 11 February 2026, meaning for over a year the legislative wing was completely unable to discuss and adopt any law or international agreement. In the meantime, the government gained the caretaker status on 23 March 2025, also continuing this until 11 February of the following year.<sup>4</sup> The Law on the Government curtails a caretaker executive to basic jobs and it cannot propose new laws, adopt new strategies or initiate new international agreements. This

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<sup>2</sup> Gërgj Besar, “Kosovo After the 2025 Parliamentary Elections – Back to Political Uncertainty,” Southeast Europe in Focus 1, no. 2025 (Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft e.V. / Southeast Europe Association, February 2025), [https://www.sogde.org/site/assets/files/33923/25012\\_sog\\_see-focus\\_1-2025\\_250227\\_01.pdf](https://www.sogde.org/site/assets/files/33923/25012_sog_see-focus_1-2025_250227_01.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Reuters. “Kosovo President Sets December 28 as Date for Snap Vote.” Reuters, November 20, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/kosovo-president-sets-dec-28-date-snap-vote-2025-11-20/>.

<sup>4</sup> Shehu, Bekim. “Kosovo at a Crossroads after Failure to Form Government.” Deutsche Welle, November 1, 2025. <https://www.dw.com/en/kosovo-at-a-crossroads-after-albin-kurti-fails-to-form-government/a-74576053>.

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<sup>1</sup> Emini, Donika and Pollozhani Lura, “Elections: A Step Toward Pluralism, but Stability Remains Elusive,” BiEPAG Blog, February 17, 2025, <https://www.biepag.eu/blog/kosovo-elections-a-step-toward-pluralism-but-stability-remains-elusive/>.

provided for a “Schrodinger’s Cat” state in which the executive and legislative wings exist on paper but cannot exercise some of the most basic functions.

As of the writing of this paper, Kosovo is barely out of electoral campaign mode since a president could not be elected and the Assembly was dissolved on 6 March 2026. The 7 June elections have not produced a clear winner, and the path to creating the new institutions remains unclear. This continued absence of stable institutions has imposed enormous costs on citizens. Beyond the financial costs of organizing elections, which are mentioned often, the lack of a functional Assembly seriously risked 1.1 billion euros in international agreements.<sup>5</sup> In lieu of a stable executive, many reforms remained unexecuted, economy is totally at the mercy of the ‘invisible hand’. Beyond them, Kosovo is paying opportunity costs.

## 2. The hidden costs of inaction: a story of what could have been

Economic costs aside, one of the biggest victims of the political class's inability to create stable institutions was the country's European integration. While political parties have historically differed on ideologies and policy solutions to the different problems of the country, the one topic commanding overall popularity was the European Union aspirations of Kosovo. While other countries in the region have lost countless hours debating the merits of aligning with the West vs the East, luckily for Kosovo, no such discussion was ever on the public debate agenda. Yet the country's politicians

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<sup>5</sup> Hulaj, Jehona. “Bllokada institucionale po i kushton shtrenjtë Kosovës, humbje mbi 1 miliardë euro nga mosratifikimi i marrëveshjeve ndërkombëtare.” *Telegrafi*, August 3, 2025. <https://telegrafi.com/bllokada-institucionale-po-kushton-shtrenjte-kosoves-humbje-mbi-1-miliarde-euro-nga-mosratifikimi-marreveshjeve-nderkombetare/>.

successfully created artificial blockades that have taken the European agenda hostage.

European integration is not a series of declarations of legitimate aspirations and, even, what one might sentimentally call “the European destiny” of a people. It requires a state machinery that can credibly undertake obligations and competently execute them. In broader terms, this requires adherence to the so-called Copenhagen criteria of ‘democracy, rule of law and free markets’, as well as the technical capability to translate thousands of EU laws and regulations into a national legislative framework. In the last year and a half Kosovo has unfortunately proven itself incapable of doing the latter. While the state of democracy and rule of law is generally better than some EU member states, the political crisis of 2025-26 has rendered Reform and Growth Facility (RGF), candidate status and Council of Europe membership infeasible.

### 2.1 New Growth Plan

In numerous studies one of the biggest concerns for Kosovar citizens is the economy.<sup>6</sup> For a rapid economic development, a source of large-scale investments is needed, and the Growth Plan was designed to provide exactly that. While the previous Instrument of Pre-Accession (IPA) funds were an important source of financial support, their scale is diminished compared to the 883 million euros allocated to Kosovo with RGF, which makes it the largest recipient per capita.<sup>7</sup> Its importance is amplified by the fact that Kosovo was

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<sup>6</sup> Ahmeti, Nadije. “Ekonomia e Kosovës Në Dekadën e Fundit: Rritje Në Shifra, Ulje Në Jetën Reale.” *Radio Evropa e Lirë*, January 12, 2026. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/ekonomia-ne-kosove-shifra-dekada-e-fundit-33644072.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Loxha Stublla, Arbëresha. “The New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans: A Look into the Framework and Promises.” *Group for Legal and Political Studies*, July 2024. <https://legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/GLPS-PA06-The-New-Growth-Plan-for-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>.

under EU measures since June 2023, which blocked access to IPA funds. The overall goal is to double the economies of the Western Balkans region by 2030, making EU accession both more feasible and marketable. All Kosova needed to do was to create a Reform Agenda (RA) in which it commits to a list of reforms, ratifies the two treaties in parliament, and finally executes them as foreseen within the time limits.

While the Kosovar government was able to formulate its Reform Agenda and submit it to the European Commission for revision within a reasonable timeline, the Assembly was stuck at the procedurally easiest step: ratification. The Facility Agreement was first presented to the Assembly on 4 December 2024, when it failed to receive the two-thirds support required for international treaties. In the subsequent period for well over 15 months, the Assembly was too busy with political debates to put this matter to a vote. The fact that, for the majority of 2025, the Assembly could not be constituted without a speaker rendered the vote legally impossible. As a result, the Facility and Loan Agreements could only be ratified on 13 February 2026.<sup>8</sup> The completely unnecessary delays meant that the pre-financing of 7% was executed with a delay of over a year, and for the first three of seven semesters, Kosova could not submit an official report of implementation and could not implement any reform that required a vote in the parliament or new strategies.

Combined with the new elections set for 7 June 2026, this means that the majority of the reform steps set for June 2025, whose grace period ends on 30 June 2026, will be lost. If the elections produce a hung parliament or the new establishment

refuses to dutifully exercise its role in electing a new president, the grace period of December 2026 may be lost as well, at which point the economic loss from the Growth Plan may well be in the lower 9-digit range. In the previous monitoring reports, GLPS has already warned that the speed at which the reforms are executed is rather slow, and the country needs political stability to fulfil these obligations. Otherwise, Kosova will have to implement those reforms one way or another, but if the deadlines are not met, they risk not fulfilling them without financial incentives. Therefore, so far, the Growth Plan has cost Kosova access to development funds and has also eroded its credibility as a country that can successfully negotiate its membership in the EU.

## 2.2 EU Candidate Status

One of the hidden victims of lost time in 2025 and 2026 was also the prospect of Kosova gaining candidate status. One of the most important milestones on a country's journey to EU membership is gaining candidate status. This is because it requires an application and a vote by the European Council, which signals a political readiness for admission. In recent years, hours after the commencement of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Kyiv submitted its application for membership, followed by Moldova and Georgia, all of whom were granted candidate status.<sup>9</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina found itself winning the lottery with a ticket it had not purchased and also gained the candidate status despite not fulfilling the technical criteria set by the Commission. While these tectonic shifts were taking place across the continent, the political inertia of the Kosovar government had another chance to show

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<sup>8</sup> Gërgji, Besar. "Reform Agenda Update - Reform Monitor Kosovo - 2ND SEMESTER, 2025." Group for Legal and Political Studies, March 2026. <https://legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/GLPS-Reform-Agenda-Update-Kosovo-March-2026.pdf> .

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<sup>9</sup> Sapir, André. "How Should the EU Respond to Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine's Membership Aspirations?" Bruegel, May 26, 2026. <https://www.bruegel.org/blog-post/how-should-eu-respond-georgia-moldova-and-ukraines-membership-aspirations> .

itself with the late application by 15 December 2022.<sup>10</sup> By this point the metaphorical hole in the wall opened by Ukraine, so successfully exploited by Georgia and Moldova, was closed.

Kosova is currently the only democracy-oriented country in Europe that has not yet achieved this status. Admittedly, its path forward is somewhat more complicated by the fact that five of the member states have not recognized its independence. However, several factors point to a warmer political climate for granting Kosova the entry ticket. First and foremost, the toxic Orban government in Hungary was ousted recently, to the relief of democracies in the West. While public discourse often focuses on non-recognizers, Hungarian foreign minister Szijarto made a public declaration that his government would vote for any European initiative, which they have followed through by being the only recognizer country to vote against Kosova in the Council of Europe.<sup>11</sup> In the same vote, Greek and Slovak governments abstained, which is a good indicator that they could do the same in a vote in the European Council, which would be sufficient for the application to go forward. With a new pro-Western President, Nicosur Dan in Romania and warmer relations with the Sanchez government in Spain, Kosova's application is much better positioned now than a year ago.

Unfortunately, this window of opportunity is set to close soon, as the French presidential elections are fast approaching. Although at first sight these two events are not directly linked, in reality, recent history shows that

during the electoral campaign season, the French government can be quite corrosive to enlargement. In October 2019, Emmanuel Macron infamously vetoed the beginning of the negotiations between the EU and Albania & Macedonia, exactly before the subsequent elections.<sup>12</sup> As a result, to this day, Macedonia has not begun its accession negotiations because of bilateral disputes with Bulgaria. Hence, the doors are not definitively shut for Kosova; however, losing this momentum could cost Kosova for many years to come. The summer of 2026 could be a productive one for gaining candidate status rather than being spent on deciding the name of the new president.

### 2.3 Council of Europe Membership

Since its declaration of independence in 2008, one of Kosova's most important goals has been to attain membership in international organizations. While Council of Europe (CoE) membership was coveted, Russia's threat to withdraw from the organization if Kosova was accepted made this dream unfeasible for many years. The window of opportunity for membership opened after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, after which the Kremlin was ejected by the CoE.<sup>13</sup> With its main blockader out and the membership vote of two-thirds feasible, Kosova took the opportunity and immediately applied for membership on 12 May 2022. In accordance with the procedures, the Parliamentary Assembly sent its representative, Dora Bakoyannis, to prepare

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<sup>10</sup> European Council. "European Council Conclusions." Council of the European Union, December 15, 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2022/12/15/>.

<sup>11</sup> Ozturk, Talha. "Hungary to Veto Kosovo's Applications to EU Bodies: Foreign Minister." Anadolu Agency, January 10, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/hungary-to-veto-kosovos-applications-to-eu-bodies-foreign-minister/2784438>.

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<sup>12</sup> Varma, Tara, and Vessela Tcherneva. "After the French Veto: The New Scramble for the Western Balkans – European Council on Foreign Relations." European Council on Foreign Relations, October 22, 2019.

[https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_after\\_the\\_french\\_veto\\_the\\_new\\_scramble\\_for\\_the\\_western\\_balkans](https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_after_the_french_veto_the_new_scramble_for_the_western_balkans)

<sup>13</sup> Council of Europe. "The Russian Federation Is Excluded from the Council of Europe." Council of Europe Newsroom, March 16, 2022. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/the-russian-federation-is-excluded-from-the-council-of-europe>.

a report on Kosova's readiness. The subsequent report was largely positive, and after the Kosovar government granted land for the Decan Monastery, the prevailing mood in Prishtina was that the prospects of membership looked very promising. To top it all, a record 83% of the Assembly voted in favor of Kosova's application.

Amid all the optimism in Prishtina and Strasbourg, the French and German ambassadors threw in a curveball by requesting that the Kosovar government first send the draft statute of the Association of Serbian Majority Municipalities (ASMM) presented by the EU to the constitutional court for evaluation. The establishment of the ASMM was a responsibility of Kosova since the 2013 Brussels Agreement, confirmed again in 2023 in Ohrid. Although Kosova's dialogue with Serbia is not directly linked with its international aspirations, throughout the years, both parties have found themselves conditioned on their international agenda by the implementation of the previous agreements.<sup>14</sup> While Kosova's journey to CoE is still an uphill battle, it is still worth fighting for. The latest Ministerial Meeting was held on 14-15 May 2026, and Kosova's membership was not on the agenda. The prolonged political crisis robs even the most skilled diplomat of arguments in favor of the application.

### 3. Path forward; new crises vs common sense

The picture painted so far is pretty clear: 2026 was a year full of opportunities and indecision that led to the loss of those opportunities. Hundreds of millions of euros from the Growth Plan, candidate status for

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<sup>14</sup> Gergi, Besar. "The Future of Kosova- Serbia Dialogue: Normalization as a Sisyphean Exercise." Group for Legal and Political Studies, July 2024. <https://legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/GLPS-PolicyNote0124-The-Future-of-the-Dialogue-between-Kosovo-and-Serbia.pdf>.

EU membership, and pushing forward the application to the Council of Europe were among the largest opportunities lost due to political parties' inability to coalesce around strategic national interests. Remembering the costs of inaction can help the country's political elite gain a clearer vision of the steps ahead. In light of this discussion and the constitutional architecture, there are three plausible scenarios that can follow the June 7th elections. The first scenario is the ruling party, Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (LVV), forming a coalition of 80+ MPs and electing a new executive and a president. The second scenario is a hung parliament, or at least one in which LVV secures a simple majority, which is not enough to elect a president. The third and final scenario is political parties learning the lessons of the prolonged crisis, coming to their senses, and electing a new government and president, and creating functional institutions.

In the last electoral cycle, which in normal democracies is in four years, whereas in Kosova's case is barely more than four months, Vetëvendosje (LVV) was asking, semi-wisfully, to repeat the success of 2021 and gain more than 50% of the electorate. The stars aligned on 28 December 2025, and Kurti beat even his own record, gathering a landslide victory of 51.11% of the total votes.<sup>15</sup> And yet it was not enough to govern without a coalition, and when its coalition offers were denied, Vetëvendosje was asking for a 60%+ vote in the new elections to gather at least 80 MPs majority in the Assembly. While mathematically possible, this scenario is quite implausible. Such results do regularly happen in majoritarian electoral systems with first-past-the-post characteristics. For example, recently TISZA in Hungary won

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<sup>15</sup> Koha. "LVV Reaches 51 Percent, Kurti Receives over 400 Thousand Votes." KOHA.net, January 10, 2026. <https://www.koha.net/en/zgjedhjet-2025/lvv-ja-arrit-ne-gati-51-per-qind-albin-kurti-merr-mbi-400-mije-vota>

53% of the votes but 138 out of 199 (69%) seats in the parliament.<sup>16</sup> However, given the current vote count, most probably Vetëvendosje will have a simple governing majority with the help of non-Serb minority communities; however, it will not have a commanding two-thirds majority in the parliament. In the second option, there is some difference between the 9 February 2025 and 7 June elections; however, the overall balance of forces is unaltered. In this set-up, some parties gain a few seats, others may lose a few more, but the arithmetic at the end of the day does not allow either LVV or the opposition PDK or LDK to elect a president without the other. This is a situation in which politicians must prove to their electorate that they have learned their lessons and cooperate to enable a stable political setup. Otherwise, the country might end up in a cycle of repeated elections without a clear result, which would be the nightmare scenario.

Finally, the other option is cooperation between political parties to create well-functioning institutions. Kosovo does have a history of political parties electing a president with two-thirds of the vote. In the past, Atifete Jahjaga, Hashim Thaci, and Vjosa Osmani were all elected with at least 80 MPs present in the voting, as required by the Constitutional Court. Therefore, nothing unusual in asking the current Members of Parliament to agree on a common name. As an example, the current president of Germany was elected with 74% of the votes of the Federal Convention (a combination of German Federal Assembly and regional representatives).<sup>17</sup> However, in all likelihood,

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<sup>16</sup> Sorgi, Gregorio. "Hungary's Tisza Party Widens Parliamentary Majority as Final Votes Are Counted." Politico, April 19, 2026. <https://www.politico.eu/article/hungarys-tisza-party-widens-parliamentary-majority-as-final-votes-are-counted/>.

<sup>17</sup> BBC. "Germany President: Steinmeier Chosen by Lawmakers." BBC News, February 12, 2017.

this will require a coalition of at least two of the largest three parties in the parliament.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

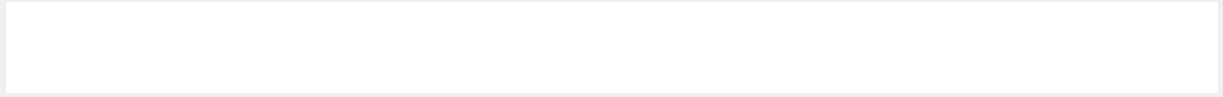
With sober consideration, 2025 can easily be identified as a lost year for Kosovo. 2026 is also on course to repeat last year's record, which is why this paper has identified some of the root causes, identified lost opportunities, and finally presented three scenarios that can unfold. The main inhibition was identified as political parties' inability to put national interests before personal and party interests and align to form a government and elect a president. Some of the largest costs incurred by this inaction are the success and funds from the Growth Plan, missing the train to gain candidate status for the EU, and not pushing forward Kosovo's application to the Council of Europe. The three most likely scenarios are either a complete domination of the political scene by one party, a negotiated settlement for a new government and president or a repeated cycle of elections. In light of these considerations, some of the recommendations presented are as follows:

- ***Elect a new government and a president as soon as possible upon the convocation of the parliament.*** The people have voted and as much as politicians would like to complain that they have not received enough votes, the picture is painted for them, not by them. In this context, they have to be responsible vis-à-vis their voters and give the country much needed stability by swiftly electing a new government and a president. Prolonging the crisis would only harm the national interest.

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<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38949530>

- ***Prioritize the European agenda by swiftly implementing the reforms outlined in the Reform Agenda.*** Kosovo has applied for membership in the European Union and now has to prove that it has the technical capabilities to approximate its legislation with the *acquis*. The best way to do it would be by a substantial implementation of the Reform Agenda as it would prove that Kosovo has the political will and administrative capacities to do so. In this way, the country could also benefit from the financial incentives of the Growth Plan.
- ***Amend the Constitution to allow for a quorum of a simple majority to***
- ***elect a president to avoid future crises.*** The election of the presidents has repeatedly proven to be problematic for Kosovar political system. This is because, arguably, the bar is set too high with a quorum requiring two-thirds participation. Of all the European countries that elect their president in the parliament, none of them have a two-thirds quorum requirement and thereby the president can be elected by a simple majority. Therefore, Article 86 paragraph 4 of the Kosovar Constitution needs to be amended to allow for a simple majority to elect a president and avoid political crises every 5 years.



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