

POLITICAL DIALOGUE FACTSHEET



May 2024

Fostering Domestic Consensus through Political Dialogue Meetings

The political crisis in Kosovo began in June 2014, following the national elections. More violent crisis erupted in 2015 following the demarcation agreement with Montenegro and the Vienna agreement on principles for ASM reached in August 2015. The opposition became violent and the government failed to respond proactively to the opposition. The "winner-takes-all" political culture and polarized government-opposition relations reached a burning point that threatened the functioning of the institutions and the stability of the country.

Outcomes of the Internal Dialogue Meetings

- 60 high-level roundtables and policy dialogue events.
- Involving key political and party representatives including Presidents, Vice Presidents of all parliamentary political parties, government and opposition leaders
- Endorsement of the Code of Conduct by all political parties
- Established regular, sustained dialogue as a new norm in political interactions
- Enhanced the quality of debate and policy-making
- Re-established communication between Albanian and Serb representatives

In 2015, the Balkans Group initiated a locally-led domestic political dialogue between the government and the opposition. This dialogue involved key political leaders, marking the first locally driven effort to enact policy change to empower local stakeholders and enhance national ownership of reforms crucial for Kosovo's state-building and EU accession goals. With financial support from the Swiss Embassy and later from the Norwegian Government, the Balkans Group organized around 60 roundtables, mediation, and policy dialogue events involving key political figures, successfully navigating the complexities of local politics to prevent violence and miscommunication and push forward the national agenda.

BPRG's theory of change centers on developing working relations among political parties to create a more "normal" working atmosphere, restoring full institutional functionality, and achieving reform-driven political agreements. By identifying common interests and fostering collaboration without international intervention, the project advanced Kosovo's state-building agenda and EU accession processes.

The impact has been significant:

- o The dialogue ended the violence and street protests
- o The opposition returned to the parliament and resumed the functioning of the parliament
- o The leaders and representatives of the government and the opposition parties engaged in constructive communication and dialogue
- o The dialogue gained support within party structures and from the international community, and received positive endorsements from the public, media, and international stakeholders, enhancing trust and willingness to engage
- o All political parties signed a Code of Conduct for the June 11, 2017, elections, committing to free, fair, and democratic elections, civil campaign conduct, and respect for results and laws
- o Leaders ceased personal insults, focusing instead on processes and reforms, elevating the quality of debate and policy-making
- o All sides agreed to work jointly and cooperate on the review of the demarcation and Brussels agreements.
- o All sides agreed to work on building consensus on the dialogue with Serbia
- o The agreement to sign the Berlin Process Agreements on Freedom of Movement, ID cards, and Diplomas marked significant progress in international cooperation.
- o Parties developed a joint approach for the efforts and activities to join the Council of Europe.
- o The initiative successfully reestablished communication between Albanian and Serb representatives, overcoming a year-long halt in internal dialogue following the Banjska attack and the resignation of Serbs from Kosovo institutions. This renewed interaction marked a significant step forward in bridging gaps and fostering cooperation between the two communities.



September 2015



August 2016



September 2016



October 2016



March 2017



April 2017



March 2023



April 2024



June 2024

A new dialogue between Albanian and Serb representatives

After the April 2024 roundtable with Albanian political parties, where there was a consensus on the need to start a dialogue with the Kosovo Serb community, the Balkans Group convened a meeting in June 2024 to revive and facilitate dialogue between the Kosovo Albanian and Serb communities. This meeting included 31 participants: the Chiefs of the four main Parliamentary Groups (VV, PDK, LDK, AAK), representatives from Kosovo Serbs in the north (Srpska Demokratija, Srpski Narodni Pokret), and political activists from the south.



This initiative aimed to address longstanding issues exacerbated by constant tensions in the north and a lack of political dialogue between the representatives of both communities.

Preparations for the meeting involved intensive efforts by the Balkans Group to secure the attendance of major political parties. Direct engagements with Kosovo's Parliament Speaker and opposition leaders were instrumental in garnering support for the participation of high-level representatives. Additionally, BPRG coordinated closely with key activists representing Kosovo Serbs in the south and north of Kosovo, to ensure comprehensive representation and effective discussion.

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Key topics included Kosovo Serb underrepresentation in local and central institutions, which has disrupted channels/forums for political discussions and is unfeasible in the long term. Police actions/policing in the north must be addressed, economic sanctions against Serbian products and well as removal of the dinar have significantly affected the living standard of the community in the north.



The meeting achieved consensus among parliamentary leaders and Kosovo Serb representatives on the need for community policing reforms, the need for more infrastructure investments in the north, and better information via greater access to media in the Serbian language.



The next steps include organizing **thematic meetings** to formulate specific recommendations, crucial for fostering stability and inclusivity in Kosovo amidst ongoing challenges.



BPRG's political dialogue initiative marked an important shift in Kosovo's political landscape, fostering a culture of civil debate and governance. The local ownership of the process, the reduction of violence, and the restored functionality of institutions highlight the initiative's success in overcoming a protracted political crisis and advancing Kosovo's state-building efforts. BPRG remains dedicated to supporting Kosovo's political evolution and reinforcing its democratic foundations through sustained dialogue and collaborative governance.

The Balkans Policy Research Group is an independent, regional think-tank based in Prishtina, Kosovo. We provide timely policy analysis and recommendations on a wide array of state-building issues; institutional and democratic consolidation; minority integration and good neighbourly 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 organisations.

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 to help develop strong, vibrant democracies, prosperous states, and societies based on the 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 Expert Support Component provides policy support and experts to the governments and other key institutions on vital policy areas, including dialogue and negotiations, security, foreign policy, regional cooperation, EU agendas and reforms, good governance, development, and law-making.

Youth in Politics Programme aims to train and build the capacity of young people active in political parties in Kosovo in areas such as the rule of law, public policy, good governance, economic development and social policy, education policy, and regional cooperation.

The Women in Politics & Decision Making platform aims to create a gender-equal environment by increasing the representation of women in politics and decision-making roles across institutions.

The Western Balkans Policy Forum - a Think-Tankers High-level Advocacy Forum, is committed to enhancing the dialogue between civil society and institutions.

The Policy Dialogue promotes domestic dialogue in Kosovo, political consensus, and reform agendas.

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.

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

Constitutional Framework, Parliamentarism, and Membership to the CoE, aims to advocate for comprehensive reforms in Kosovo's constitutional framework, improvement of parliamentary procedures, and integration into the Council of Europe.

Energy, Green & Digital Policy Hub aims to bring together government officials, experts, and think tanks to jointly devise, develop, and advocate for the right solutions.

The Policy Idea Lab platform aims to create new policy tools and spaces where policymakers, members of institutions, advisors, experts, the CSO community, academics, etc., can share their knowledge, debate policy processes and topics, and devise solutions.