



FOCUS

The “United Opposition” - Not so United Anymore

After a period of almost eight months that was characterized by a coordinated and unified approach regarding the country's political situation, the opposition parties in Parliament (Vetevendosje, AAK and NISMA) have taken individual decisions to operate separately in the future.

The signals for this break-up were visible. It was the AAK who first decided to boycott the assembly's work as a form of protest against the political situation in the country, abandoning the (“united opposition's”) former strategy of throwing tear gas in Parliament. This resulted in the resignation of the head of the AAK caucus, Mrs. Donika Kadaj Bujupi, who didn't like the changes in her party's political approach and subsequently joined Vetevendosje as their newest member. As a consequence, both AAK and Vetevendosje have started accusing each other of treason and hunger for power.

Following the disagreements amongst the opposition parties and after realizing that the ruling parties would not stop holding Assembly meetings - despite employing tear-gas - all three opposition parties have decided to boycott Parliament altogether. After all, they are still committed to rejecting the reached agreements of demarcation with Montenegro and on the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities (ASM). In the meantime, the opposition parties have continued their activities in separate ways. AAK and NISMA organized a protest against the agreements on 14 May under the motto “For a state with dignity”. In its official statement, the Kosovo Police said the number of participants was around 5.000, while the organizers claimed there were tens of thousands of protesters. Nonetheless, the most important fact remains that the protest was peaceful.

A Success for Football in Kosovo! Kosovars Now Playing on the International Stage - Is Visa-Free Travel to the EU Next?

4 May 2016 can be considered as one of the most successful days for Kosovars since independence in 2008. On this day we received the good news of a political success that helps strengthen our sovereignty. The European Commission (EC) proposed to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament the establishment of a visa - free regime between Kosovo citizens and Schengen states. The proposal was

Dear readers,

The last two months were pretty exciting. In fact Kosovo's national soccer team has won its first game against the Faroe Islands with result of 2:0. Congratulations! Perhaps you will also win the visa liberalization soon.

As you have already noticed our KASOVO monthly will be published in the future every second month, because of other obligations. The new name will be KASOVO News instead of KASOVO monthly.

As always have fun while reading it.

All the best,

Johannes D. Rey &
Team

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GUEST CORNER

The Council of Europe with its 47 member states stands out amongst the most comprehensive and inclusive bodies, that enshrine values and the highest standards of human rights protection, rule of law and democratic governance. In this frame, Kosovo citizens remain outside of 800 million Europeans and cannot use the benefits of the Guardian of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Kosovo has come of age through a road to statehood that has been a genuine human rights struggle, yet its persistence to embrace European values remains paradoxically 'rewarded' with slow pace and uncertainty. Therein, Kosovo's membership is of fundamental significance in strengthening the country's commitment and delivery on human rights, and in reaffirming our future within the European Union.

For more than a decade, the Prishtina Institute for Political Studies (PIPS) as part

made after the evaluating Commissions' last visit to monitor the progress achieved on fulfilling the required criteria for visa liberalization. Significant progress has been achieved in the visa liberalization process, nevertheless, it must be said that this recommendation is also related to other political developments in Kosovo.

The dialogue with Serbia and the compromises that have been made so far are important elements explaining why the recommendation came at this time. The two most important criteria that still need fulfillment before the process can be finalized are the ratification of demarcation with Montenegro and the establishment of the Association of Serb - Majority Municipalities (ASM). This was also pointed out clearly by Ulrike Lunachek, Vice President of the European Parliament and Rapporteur for Kosovo, on her last visit on 16 May.

One day before Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, stated that the EU Commission proposes Visa - free travel for Kosovo, citizens celebrated another important accomplishment. On 3 May, during a congress held in Budapest, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) voted in favor of Kosovo's accession to the association. Despite strong resistance from Serbia, UEFAs members voted 28 - 24 in favor of Kosovo, while two votes were declared invalid. The admission into UEFA has opened a door for Kosovo to enter the international football arena. During an International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) congress held in Mexico on 13 May, with 141 votes in favor and 23 against, delegates voted for Kosovo's accession. This marks the end of a decade - long blockade for Kosovar athletes to compete in international tournaments.

AND WE SAY

Regarding Visa - free travel in Schengen states

After a long delay, compared to other countries in the region, the decision taken by the EU to propose visa liberalization for Kosovo is absolutely positive. For the citizens it is necessary to know that the integration path is not just a dream but is actually slowly moving forward and leading to concrete results.

The recommendation for visa liberalization from the European Commission depends on fulfilling the required criteria. One of the most important of these criteria was the fight against corruption and organized crime. Only a few days before the recommendation, Kosovo police together with EULEX carried out one of the biggest anti - corruption operations yet.

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of the Council of Europe Network of Schools for Political Studies, has promoted and brought together Kosovo citizens and the Council of Europe.

In the framework of the School for Political Studies, we have worked intensively to promote the core values but also to bring to the attention of the Council of Europe authorities that Kosovo's membership is much more than a political priority of the government, civil society and citizens.

We believe that it is a fundamental long-term and strategic need emanating from our very process of integration in the European family, which is not just a goal but means for a better life for all citizens of Kosovo. This process is not only about relations between bureaucracies, but chiefly and foremost about the relations between the people of Kosovo and those of other countries across the European continent.

With the conclusion of the Stabilization and Association

Amongst the arrested is Azem Syla, an ex-UCK (Kosovo Liberty Army) commander and current Member of Parliament from PDK (Kosovo Democratic Party). The accusations against him and his group are related to organized crime and the illegal transfer of public and private properties. The arrest of a high profile politician such as Syla was a strong statement that Kosovo is determined to continue on its road towards EU integration. The proposal for Visa - free travel is a first step towards it.

Now that the recommendation is at the hands of the EU Parliament and the EU Council, while the agreements with Serbia and Montenegro still remain to be ratified, both the government and opposition are at a cross road. On the one hand, with public opinion being strongly against the agreements, the government should be careful about how to handle this situation. On the other, opposition parties cannot go against the agreements as they did before, because by voting against the ratification of the agreements they would block visa liberalization at the same time.

Regarding the new political situation after the disputes among opposition parties

With the downfall of the "unified opposition" the political scene is now open for all kinds of possibilities. Currently, a lot of people are changing party memberships, some are creating new ones, and talks about new coalitions are a common topic. In addition to this, Kosovo faces multiple important developments that might affect internal stability.

First, charges by the Special Court examining the alleged crimes committed by UCK soldiers are expected to be announced within the year. Although still not officially confirmed, it is a "public secret" that these charges are going to affect people with great political weight. This complex process will necessarily create the need for increased stability and may even lead to early elections.

Another ongoing challenge is the functioning of parliament. The opposition's boycott of Parliament hasn't made the work of the parliament any easier. Every session week, the ruling coalition (PDK, LDK, Lista Srpska and minority parties) is struggling to bring together the number of MPs needed for sessions to be held in the first place, and then to keep the MPs in the sessions for long enough in order for them to participate in a vote. A lot of Parliament sessions had to be canceled due to the lack of quota (at least 61 out of the 120 MPs have to be present). This is a problem that needs to be addressed sooner or later, however, it probably cannot be resolved until the opposition returns to Parliament.

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Agreement, Kosovo's membership in the Council of Europe is of particular importance, as membership will be of great support to Kosovo by affording its access to expertise and guidance in terms of guardianship role for human rights and minority protection for Kosovo citizens.

Kosovo citizens have embraced European values. The Kosovo institutions, civil society and the citizens have worked hard to achieve democratic standards, but in order to help Kosovo reach and maintain these standards, we need the support and attention of all member states in our efforts towards the full membership in the Council of Europe.

Kosovo citizens deserve a place among others in the big European family.

Leonora Kryeziu

Director, Prishtina
Institute for Political
Studies

Views expressed in the guest corner are the personal views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation.

As a result of the last few very tense months - filled with tear-gas and egg pelting inside Parliament, stone throwing and fire in the streets, talks of potential early elections and coalitions behind closed doors, Kosovo politics has fallen into a state of silence. If this is just the calm before the storm is to be determined in the days to come.

Regarding Kosovo's membership in football organizations

Many felt discriminated because of the isolation from international cultural and sports associations. The decisions of UEFA and FIFA to include Kosovo provides an excellent opportunity for young generations to develop and present their skills in the country's most popular sport and compete with their international peers. Serbia's blockade to prevent Kosovo's membership in UEFA is against the reached agreements in Brussels for the normalization of relations. The agreement states clearly that neither of the two is allowed to block the other in their tentative to become members in European organizations. Having overcome this challenge will hopefully open the doors to accession in other European and international organizations.

KAS NEWS CORNER

From 22 - 26 May, a group of women from our partner party LDK went on a study trip to Berlin upon the invitation of the KAS. Participants were given thoughts and suggestions on how to improve the participation of women in politics and society in their home country.



Kosovo delegation in Germany together with Ms. Claudia Hassenbach

During several meetings in the German Bundestag, different ministries, the CDU and KAS - headquarters, agencies and NGO's, they had the chance to share their experiences and thoughts for a "stronger voice" and

a bigger role of women politicians within the party, as well as within local and regional politics.

As part of our project on climate and energy and in collaboration with our partners AKEREE and SHERK, we jointly organized the Academy of Energy Efficiency and Climate Change. In the last four years, we regularly organized the academy with municipal officials, representatives of civil society and students. Subjects reviewed were always a foregoing of further actions (as it is the case with membership in the Mayors Convention).

From 21 – 24 April, our office in cooperation with our partners the Wilfred Martens Centre for European Studies and the Civic Institute jointly organized the seminar "Visions and Wishes for Europe: Shaping the Future of Europe". The objective of this training simulation is to deal with wishes for and views of Europe as it is, how it could be and how it should be in the near future from the point of view of young professionals and young party members from the region. The role play simulates the formal process of the accession negotiations between candidate countries, current EU member states and EU institutions.



Participants in Visions and Wishes sharing their views about European Union

HAVE YOU HEARD?



With an average age of 25 years, Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe. Albanian and Serbian are the official languages while English and German are widely used. This is a strong asset for anyone who decides to invest in Kosovo. The business environment is becoming more competitive in the region. Advantages such as tax system, abundant natural resources, quick and easy business registration, and transparent laws on foreign investments make Kosovo an attractive and friendly environment for foreign investors.