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Observation of the early elections to the Assembly of Kosovo* (28 December 2025)

Election observation report[1]
Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau
Rapporteur: Mr Yunus EMRE, Türkiye, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group

1. Introduction

1. On 20 November 2025, Ms Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu, President of Kosovo*[2], called for early elections to the Assembly of Kosovo, to be held on 28 December 2025. On 24 November, the Parliamentary Assembly received an invitation to observe these elections. The Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly decided to accept this invitation and to establish an ad hoc committee of 11 members to observe the elections. Subsequently it appointed me as chairperson of this committee.

2. The composition of the ad hoc committee (hereafter "the PACE delegation") is provided in Appendix 1.

3. In line with the 2004 co-operation agreement between the Assembly and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), Ms Florence Ganoux, an expert from the Venice Commission, provided legal assistance to the PACE delegation.

4. Our delegation visited Kosovo from 26 to 29 December 2025. During its mission, it met with leaders and representatives of the major political parties, including those representing non-majority communities; the chairperson of the Central Election Commission; the chairperson of the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel; as well as representatives of the international community, NGOs, and the media. The programme of meetings appears in Appendix 2. Following election day, the delegation issued a statement (see Appendix 3).

5. PACE was the sole international organisation observing the elections, alongside an European Union mission consisting of three election experts.

6. The PACE delegation wishes to thank the authorities of Kosovo for their invitation and support, as well as all interlocutors and international partners for their co-operation. The delegation also acknowledges the invaluable assistance provided by the Council of Europe Office in Pristina in facilitating the organisation of the election observation mission.

2. Political context and recent developments

7. Kosovo is not a member of the Council of Europe. Resolution 2094 (2016) of the Parliamentary Assembly, entitled "The situation in Kosovo and the role of the Council of Europe" notes that, as several Council of Europe member States have not recognised Kosovo as a sovereign and independent State, the Council of Europe "follows a policy of status-neutrality towards Kosovo, while supporting its progressive

1. The report is drawn up under the responsibility of the rapporteur.
2. *Throughout this document, all reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

alignment with the Council of Europe's standards in the areas of democracy, human rights and the rule of law." In accordance with this resolution, the Assembly of Kosovo is invited to designate a delegation to the PACE.

8. PACE has previously observed the 2001 elections to the Assembly of Kosovo, as well as the municipal elections in 2000 and 2002. More recently, PACE observed the elections to the Assembly of Kosovo held on 9 February 2025. Separately, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe observed the 2004 elections to the Assembly of Kosovo, the 2007 Assembly and municipal elections, and the municipal elections in October 2025.

9. The previous elections to the Assembly of Kosovo were held on 9 February 2025, in accordance with the Constitution of Kosovo and Law No. 03/L-073 on General Elections. A PACE delegation observed these elections, which were assessed as competitive and pluralistic, offering voters a genuine choice, despite concerns related to political polarisation and the broader institutional environment (see Doc. 16146 rev). The election results were politically inconclusive: Vetëvendosje (LVV) confirmed to be the largest parliamentary group but did not secure an absolute majority in the 120-seat assembly. Non-majority communities achieved representation through constitutionally guaranteed seats. This fragmented outcome triggered constitutional procedures for the constitution of the Assembly and the formation of a government but also heightened the risk of post-electoral institutional deadlock.

10. After the certification of election results, the Assembly of Kosovo entered a prolonged period of deadlock. According to Articles 66 and 67 of the Constitution, it is constituted through the verification of mandates and the election of its leadership, including the president and deputy presidents, with positions reserved for representatives of non-majority communities. Between spring and summer 2025, repeated constitutive sessions failed to result in the election of a complete leadership, primarily due to the inability to secure the required majority for deputy president positions reserved for non-majority communities. Consequently, the Assembly of Kosovo was unable to fulfil its legislative and oversight functions, and the government formation process remained legally obstructed. This situation created legal uncertainty regarding the status and powers of interim institutions, and highlighted ambiguities in the constitutional framework concerning the legal consequences of an incompletely constituted Assembly.

11. The failure to elect a deputy president representing the Serbian community became the central constitutional issue of 2025. The Serbian List (Srpska Lista) submitted constitutional referrals, alleging violations of constitutional guarantees regarding minority representation and arguing that the constitutive session could not be considered complete without the election of a deputy president from the Serbian community. Acting under Article 113 of the Constitution and the Law on the Constitutional Court, the Constitutional Court granted a temporary measure in September 2025, suspending further Assembly activities and steps toward government formation in order to preserve the constitutional order pending a decision on the merits.

12. In its subsequent judgment, the Constitutional Court held that the Assembly of Kosovo had not been legally constituted due to non-compliance with the constitutional requirement to elect deputy presidents from non-majority communities and imposed a binding deadline to remedy the situation. This ruling generated substantial legal debate, particularly regarding whether the Constitution requires the deputy president representing the Serbian community to be from the political party holding the majority of Serbian seats, or whether an individual MP's ethnic self-identification is sufficient. This controversy highlighted unresolved tensions between individual parliamentary mandates, collective minority representation and parliamentary autonomy.

13. The local electoral context in 2025 was influenced by the expiration of the mandates of Albanian mayors in Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo. These mayors had been elected in the extraordinary local elections of April 2023, which were conducted in accordance with the legal framework but were marked by extremely low turnout due to a boycott by the Kosovo Serb community, resulting in limited democratic legitimacy. In 2024-2025, their mandates were terminated through political and legal arrangements designed to restore functional and representative local governance. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe assessed that the October 2025 local elections were generally well administered and competitive. However, it reiterated concerns regarding uneven minority participation, low voter engagement in certain municipalities, and the politicisation of electoral administration, particularly during the candidate certification and electoral complaints processes. LVV emerged as the strongest party nationwide in terms of overall electoral performance, although results varied significantly across municipalities.

14. As political actors failed to resolve the leadership impasse within the deadlines established by the Constitutional Court, early elections became the constitutionally mandated remedy to restore institutional functionality and democratic legitimacy. In this context, the certification of candidates from the Serbian List for the anticipated early elections, scheduled for 28 December 2025, became an additional point of legal contention.

3. Electoral system and legal framework

15. Kosovo has been a member of the Venice Commission since 2014. The Venice Commission has issued several opinions on (draft) legislation in Kosovo, including draft amendments to legislation on political financing in 2018 and the Draft Law on Public Gatherings in 2020. Significant electoral legal reforms were undertaken in Kosovo in preparation for the February 2025 elections. These elections were conducted under the Law on General Elections (June 2023) and the Law on Political Party Financing (August 2022), neither of which has been reviewed by the Venice Commission. The application of these laws during the February 2025 elections to the Assembly of Kosovo and the 2025 local elections revealed shortcomings concerning legal certainty in candidate certification, the effectiveness of electoral dispute resolution, enforcement of campaign and financing regulations, and the practical implementation of gender representation legal requirements.

16. The Assembly of Kosovo (Kuvendi i Kosovës) comprises 120 seats, with representatives elected every four years through a proportional representation system with open lists. Kosovo uses a single national electoral district, with a 5% threshold of the total vote required for parties to gain representation. Non-majority communities are guaranteed 20 reserved seats: ten are allocated to representatives of the Kosovo Serb community, while the remaining ten are divided among other non-majority groups as follows: 3 seats for the Bosniak community, 2 seats for the Turkish community, 1 seat each for the Gorani, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, and 1 additional seat awarded to either the Roma, Ashkali, or Egyptian community based on which group's list receives the highest level of support.

17. Regarding out-of-country voting, the Law on General Elections was amended in 2023 and further detailed in the 2024 regulations. Previously, voting abroad was conducted exclusively by mail. In 2025, registered voters received ballots either via email or postal mail, which they were required to print, complete, and return by mail to the Central Election Commission (CEC). According to the CEC, postal voting for out-of-country voters became particularly significant in the December 2025 early elections but also exposed ongoing operational challenges. Despite high interest – with over 84 000 applications received, approximately 72 000 approved, and more than 50 000 voters registered for postal voting – the gap between registration and actual participation indicated that the system had yet to reach its full potential. The mid-December 2025 dispatch of ballots and repeated guidance from the CEC reflected incremental improvements, but also highlighted procedural difficulties and voter uncertainty. Despite these limitations, the volume of postal votes remained politically significant, with the potential to influence seat allocation in a closely contested electoral setting.

18. A controversy regarding appointment procedures also indirectly affected the number of diaspora voting centres. The CEC initially approved additional voting locations outside formal diplomatic missions, but this decision was subsequently annulled by the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) and confirmed by the Supreme Court, limiting diaspora voting to embassies and consulates only. This judicial reversal underscored tensions regarding the interpretation of election regulations and the CEC's discretionary powers, contributing to broader concerns about electoral management.

3.1. Legal electoral framework

19. Although Kosovo is not a member of the Council of Europe and has not formally ratified the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 1, ECHR), the Constitution of Kosovo (2008) explicitly states that the ECHR and its protocols are directly applicable and take precedence over national laws in the event of a conflict. Article 22 of the Constitution lists the ECHR as one of the international human rights instruments that are directly binding in Kosovo.

20. The main legislation governing the December 2025 elections includes the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Law No. 08/L-228 on General Elections and Law No. 03/L-189 on Political Parties. While national legislation is adequate for the conduct of democratic elections, the European Union (EU) has actively monitored and promoted electoral reforms in Kosovo. International election observation missions and EU negotiators have identified several gaps, including the regulation and oversight of campaign finance.

21. Following the adoption of the new Law on General Elections in 2023, the CEC introduced 17 new regulations to align secondary legislation, decisions, and procedures with the updated electoral framework. Although Kosovo has made significant progress in consolidating its electoral system, persistent issues remain in electoral practice. The European Commission report, issued in November 2025, noted that the framework for elections was generally free and fair, as demonstrated by the peaceful, competitive, and inclusive elections held on 9 February 2025, the first under the newly revised framework aligned with EU Election Observation Mission recommendations. However, while the ECAP effectively addressed complaints, there were attempts to politicise the CEC's work, The campaign period was competitive but marred by harsh rhetoric, misuse of public resources, and socio-political pressure, particularly in Kosovo Serb majority areas. Additionally, the Independent Media Commission (IMC) faced challenges in enforcing its oversight due to governance issues, and concerns persisted regarding inadequate responses to electoral disinformation and foreign interference. The Assembly of Kosovo's failure to constitute itself has been seriously undermining the functioning of key democratic institutions.

3.2. Gender equality

22. Article 28 of Law No. 08/L-228 on General Elections requires that each political entity's candidate list must include at least 30% representation from each gender. Specifically, the law mandates that in every group of three candidates on the list, there is at least one candidate of each gender. In addition, the electoral law provides an incentive: the CEC allocates additional public funds – amounting to 1% of the total funds allocated to the political entity – for every mandate won by women exceeding the 30% quota at the time of certification.

23. On 19 December 2024, the Constitutional Court ruled on case KO15/24, which concerned the constitutionality of Article 28. The Court unanimously found that the gender quota does not violate Article 45 of the Constitution, which guarantees the freedom of election and participation in public affairs. The judgment emphasised that gender equality is a fundamental value of Kosovo's constitutional order, and that public authorities have a positive obligation to advance it. While confirming the legality of the 30% quota, the Court clarified that the Assembly of Kosovo retains the authority to adjust this percentage as necessary to advance gender equality.

24. Despite a generally adequate legal framework, women's participation in Kosovo's 2025 electoral processes remained structurally constrained. In the February 2025 elections, while the statutory gender quota of at least 30% as required by the Law on General Elections was met, the visibility of women, their media presence and electoral success remained limited. Women continued to be under-represented in leadership roles. Similar trends were evident in the 2025 local elections: women were notably under-represented among mayoral candidates and elected mayors, even though there was a higher proportion of women on municipal assembly lists.

25. In the December 2025 early elections, candidate lists once again broadly complied with the formal quota requirements. However, concerns persisted about the substantive inclusion of women, as quotas did not necessarily translate into equal campaigning opportunities, media coverage or realistic chances of election. These developments underscore an enduring gap between formal guarantees of equality and women's effective participation in the political process.

4. Election administration, voters list and registration of candidates

4.1. Election administration

26. The 2025 early elections were administered by a three-tier electoral administration, consisting of the CEC, 38 Municipal Election Commissions (MECs), and 941 polling stations across the 38 municipalities. Each municipality had one polling station designated for conditional voting (see also paragraph 58). Voting from abroad was also facilitated, subject to the limitations outlined above.

27. In terms of composition, the CEC comprises six members appointed by the six largest political parties represented in the Assembly of Kosovo; these members are not permitted to participate in the allocation of reserved seats. If there are fewer than six such groups in the Assembly, the larger parties may nominate additional members. In addition, one member is appointed by Assembly representatives holding reserved or guaranteed seats for the Kosovo Serb community, while three members are appointed by Assembly representatives holding seats reserved or guaranteed for other non-majority communities in Kosovo.

28. In the run-up to the early elections of 28 December 2025, concerns about the (perceived) politicisation of the CEC became particularly pronounced during the certification process for the Serb List (Srpska Lista). Although the Law on General Elections authorises the CEC to verify and certify political entities based on objective legal criteria, the deliberations revealed differing interpretations of the CEC's mandate – especially regarding whether factors beyond strict legal compliance should be considered. The public nature of these debates, combined with the party-based composition of the CEC, reinforced concerns that political considerations may have influenced what is fundamentally an administrative decision. In line with the Venice Commission's standards on electoral administration – which emphasise that election management bodies must not only act impartially but also be perceived as doing so – this episode underscored a structural vulnerability in the current model: when decisions about certification in politically sensitive cases are made by bodies composed of party nominees, there is an increased risk that both legal certainty and public confidence may be undermined, even if there is no formal finding of illegality.

29. Each MEC consists of seven members, although this number may increase if more political entities qualify for representation. Every MEC is chaired by an executive officer employed by the CEC. In addition, one member is appointed by each political entity that has surpassed the electoral threshold in national elections, provided the threshold applies to them. The composition of the Polling Station Committees (PSCs) mirrors that of the MECs.

30. In December 2025, internal disagreements within the CEC regarding the appointment and replacement of MEC members arose from the application of Law No. 03/L-073 on General Elections. According to Articles 18-21, the CEC is responsible for establishing MECs and ensuring that nominations and replacements submitted by political entities meet the legal criteria and are processed transparently. During CEC sessions, some commissioners objected that certain replacement proposals – particularly in municipalities such as North Mitrovica – were submitted late or lacked adequate supporting documentation, limiting their ability to verify compliance with the law and the CEC Rules of Procedure. While these disputes did not nullify the appointments, they highlighted procedural tensions and transparency concerns in implementing the legal framework, especially under tight pre-election deadlines.

31. The work of the CEC is supported by several departments and institutions that oversee specific aspects of election administration. Notably, the Office for Registration, Certification, and Financial Control of Political Entities is responsible for certifying political entities and monitoring campaign financing. Other supporting institutions include the Anti-Corruption Agency, the Ombudsperson Institution, the National Agency for Data Protection, the Office of the Auditor General, and the ECAP.

4.2. Voters lists

32. All citizens who are at least 18 years old on election day and whose right to vote has not been restricted by a court decision are eligible to vote in Kosovo on election day, in the municipality where they are registered, provided their name appears in the Central Civil Registry. The CEC is responsible for maintaining the voters list, ensuring that it is based on accurate, up-to-date information from the Central Civil Registry. The CEC must systematically remove deceased individuals and those who have renounced their citizenship from the list.

33. Eligible voters may register by submitting their application either electronically through the designated online platform or in person at their local MEC office. To complete registration, applicants must provide the required documentation, including a valid form of identification such as an ID card, passport, or driver's license. Additionally, a completed registration form and, in some cases, proof of residency are required. The MEC is responsible for reviewing applications and verifying the authenticity of submitted documents. If an application is denied, the MEC must issue a written explanation and inform the applicant of their right to appeal the decision.

34. Following the 2023/2024 electoral reform, the CEC implemented measures to simplify voter registration, with a particular focus on voters living abroad. The reform aimed to provide multiple avenues for registration and ensure that all eligible voters residing outside Kosovo could participate in the electoral process. It introduced online registration options and outreach programs to encourage participation among under-represented groups.

35. While Kosovo's 2024 population census recorded 1 586 659 residents, including minors, the final voters list for the December 2025 elections to the Assembly of Kosovo listed 2 113 409 voters. This discrepancy cannot be explained solely by diaspora registrations, which accounted for approximately 90 000 voters. Instead, it points to a structural inflation of the voters list, stemming from citizenship-based registration, the lack of effective deregistration mechanisms for emigrants, and the absence of systematic harmonisation

between census data and the civil registry. Although this approach reflects a policy choice favouring broad enfranchisement, it raises concerns regarding the accuracy, transparency, and public confidence in the voters list.

36. The accuracy of the voters list is of fundamental importance: inaccuracies in these lists have a direct impact on the official turnout rate, which may be lower than the actual participation rate. Furthermore, inaccurate electoral registers may facilitate electoral fraud: individuals without the right to vote could participate in the election, while conversely, eligible voters might be prevented from casting their ballots[3].

4.3. Registration of candidates

37. In order to participate in the electoral process, a political entity must apply for and obtain certification from the CEC. To do so, entities are required to submit a comprehensive application that includes a list of members, the entity's statute, and evidence of financial viability. The CEC thoroughly reviews these applications to ensure compliance with legal standards, including adherence to democratic principles and human rights. This rigorous review process allows the CEC to assess the legitimacy and readiness of each political entity to participate in the electoral process.

38. Any individual whose name appears on the voters list is eligible to be certified as a candidate, except in the following cases:

– the individual is a public official with special status under the Law on Public Officials;

– the individual is a member of the foreign service or a diplomatic representative;

– the individual is a chairperson or a member of the CEC or of a MEC;

– the individual is an official of the ECAP;

– the individual has been deprived of the right to stand as a candidate by a final court decision, including a decision by the ECAP;

– the individual has been found guilty of a criminal offence by a final court decision within the past three years and sentenced to one or more years of effective imprisonment;

– the individual has failed to pay a fine imposed by the ECAP or the CEC;

– the individual has failed to comply with an order issued by the ECAP.

39. The deadline for submission of candidate lists was on 7 December 2025, with 24 political entities submitting 1 181 candidates for seats in the Assembly of Kosovo, including parties, coalitions, citizens' initiatives and one independent candidate. Among the main Albanian-majority parties, Vetëvendosje (LVV) published its list headed by Albin Kurti, while the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) and NISMA also finalised and released their leading candidates. The Srpska Lista submitted 33 candidates. Three Serbian political entities were contesting the elections, including the Kosovo Alliance, which submitted a list of 10 candidates primarily from Serb-majority municipalities.

40. The CEC declined to certify the Srpska Lista party's candidate list, despite the absence of explicit statutory grounds under the Law on General Elections. This decision followed a recurring pattern observed earlier in 2025, where initial refusals to certify candidates of Srpska Lista were overturned by the ECAP on 5th December 2025. Repeated non-certification decisions raised concerns regarding the consistency and impartiality of electoral administration, as well as compliance with constitutional guarantees of political participation, equality before the law, and effective representation of non-majority communities, as enshrined in Articles 3, 24, 45 and 58 of the Constitution, interpreted in light of established European electoral standards on inclusiveness, legal certainty, and effective remedies.

3. See the Venice Commission Report on figure based management of possible election fraud (CDL-AD(2010)043)

5. Election campaign and financing

5.1. Election campaign

41. In the case of early elections, the legal framework permits shortened electoral timelines, resulting in a compressed campaign period ahead of the 28 December 2025 early parliamentary elections. The election campaign ran from 17 December to 28 December, lasting a total of 12 days instead of the usual 30-day campaign period during a regular election cycle.

42. Certified political entities are permitted to hold gatherings in public spaces as well as in educational, sports, and cultural institutions, provided these activities do not disrupt the institutions' normal operations. Prior approval must be obtained from both the relevant institution and the MEC, with requests required 24 to 48 hours in advance. The MEC may deny a request if the venue has already been reserved by another political entity with an earlier submission. Any certified political entity that receives a denial from the MEC may appeal to the ECAP within 24 hours of receiving the response.

5.2. Campaign financing

43. Recent amendments to the electoral framework have aimed to enhance transparency and accountability in campaign finance, in alignment with European standards. These changes were tested during the February 2025 parliamentary elections as well as subsequent local electoral processes. Following the CEC's adoption of an internal regulation on political party finances in January 2024, the legal framework introduced clearer disclosure obligations, a ban on cash and anonymous donations, and a strengthened sanctioning regime. However, experience during the 2025 electoral cycle showed that the effectiveness of these measures was limited by constrained institutional capacity, delayed audits, and the predominantly ex-post nature of financial controls.

44. While the CEC's Office for Financial Control continued to audit annual party finance reports through independent auditors, oversight during active campaign periods was often not timely enough to have a meaningful preventive impact. In line with Venice Commission standards, these observations suggest that, despite improvements to the regulatory framework, the lack of prompt disclosure and effective, proportionate enforcement during election campaigns undermines the framework's capacity to ensure equality of opportunity and public trust. Planned measures to further enhance transparency, such as the introduction of an online platform for public access to party finance data, had not yet produced tangible results during the elections under review.

6. Media environment

45. As outlined in Chapter VII of the Law (No. 03/L-073) on General Elections, all media are required to ensure that certified political entities receive fair and equitable coverage during the electoral campaign. Broadcast media must provide fair and equal access to political discussion programs and debates for all certified entities. The law strictly regulates political advertising on radio and television, and stipulates that print media must offer fair and equitable access to advertising space for all certified political entities upon request. Both print and electronic media are required to apply uniform rates to all entities without discrimination, and every paid political advertisement must clearly identify the organisation or individual responsible.

46. Press freedom in Kosovo remained a concern throughout 2024-2025, with ongoing reports of attacks, threats, and intimidation against journalists and media workers, as well as structural challenges to media independence. In 2025, Kosovo experienced a sharp decline in the World Press Freedom Index, falling to 99th place, reflecting increased risks for journalists, growing political pressure on media outlets, and threats to editorial independence. The media environment was further undermined by politically influenced regulation and institutional pressure. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and other observers emphasised that media freedom continues to be hampered by politicised regulation, limited access to public information, and serious threats to the safety of journalists.

47. Television remains the primary source of information in Kosovo. The country has more than 130 radio and television channels operating in a relatively small market, many of which are strongly divided along political and ethnic lines. The highly concentrated television sector is dominated by private, Pristina-based channels, although the public broadcaster Radio and Television of Kosovo (RTK) also plays a significant role. Among the newer online news portals, notable ones such as BIRN and Kosovo 2.0 have emerged, with Kosovo 2.0 being one of the few outlets publishing content in both Albanian and Serbian. The high concentration of media ownership has raised concerns regarding transparency and the diversity of viewpoints.

Investigations have revealed a lack of transparency in media ownership, largely due to gaps in the legal framework – such as unclear ownership disclosure requirements and deficiencies in the Law on Media Concentration – thus failing to guarantee transparency.

48. Media outlets are guaranteed freedom of expression by the legal framework, including the Constitution, the Law No. 06/L-088 on the Media, and the Law on Radio and Television of Kosovo (RTK). Kosovo has adopted significant reforms to its media regulatory framework, most notably through the new Law on the Independent Media Commission (IMC). However, the IMC, Kosovo's independent broadcast media regulator, has been at the center of serious governance and legal controversy following the adoption of a 2024 law that expanded its powers and changed appointment and dismissal procedures – changes widely criticised for enabling political interference. In April 2025, the Constitutional Court unanimously annulled this law, ruling that key provisions related to the selection and removal of IMC members, its scope of powers, and its sanctioning authority were incompatible with constitutional guarantees of independence. This decision reinstated the previous legal framework and underscored the need for a new, constitutionally compliant statute to be adopted through transparent public debate. In June 2025, the Supreme Court also struck down an IMC Rules of Procedure amendment that had been used to change the commission's leadership, finding it unlawful due to procedural violations and reaffirming the principles of legality, transparency, and institutional independence in IMC governance.

49. The law also subjects online media to a sanction regime, including potential fines of up to €40 000. These developments have sparked widespread criticism from both local and international organisations, raising serious concerns about potential threats to press freedom and media pluralism.

7. Complaints and appeals

50. Election dispute resolution in Kosovo is primarily governed by Law No. 08/L-228 on General Elections, which establishes a structured framework for addressing grievances related to the electoral process. Legal standing to file complaints is granted to a variety of entities and individuals, including political parties, coalitions, civil society initiatives, independent candidates certified by the CEC, and any registered voter in Kosovo. Additionally, representatives of certified political entities, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations involved in election observation are also entitled to submit complaints. These stakeholders may report any violations they witness during the electoral process, particularly those related to transparency and fairness. Furthermore, members of the CEC and other electoral bodies can initiate complaints about violations they observe in the conduct of elections or breaches of electoral law by political entities or candidates.

51. At the center of this framework is the ECAP, an independent body tasked with adjudicating complaints related to electoral violations. The ECAP is responsible for reviewing and resolving disputes concerning voter registration, campaign conduct, and any other irregularities that arise during elections.

52. The law sets out clear procedures for filing complaints, which must be submitted within a specified timeframe after the disputed event. According to Article 119 of Law No. 08/L-228 on General Elections, any person with a legal interest in a matter within ECAP's jurisdiction, or whose rights related to the electoral process under the law or electoral rules have been violated, may file a complaint with ECAP within 48 hours after the close of polling stations. ECAP is required to decide on the complaint within 96 hours of submission. The panel is mandated to thoroughly investigate all complaints, ensuring that all parties involved are provided the opportunity to present their case. This process may involve gathering evidence, hearing testimonies, and considering relevant documents. ECAP's decisions can include upholding or dismissing complaints, imposing sanctions on political entities or candidates, and ordering corrective actions when necessary.

53. The law also establishes a mechanism for appealing ECAP decisions. If a party is dissatisfied with ECAP's ruling, they may appeal to the Supreme Court of Kosovo, which acts as the final authority in electoral disputes. This multi-tiered system ensures that effective legal remedies are available for all parties.

54. During the February 2025 elections, significant disputes arose between political parties and ECAP over fines imposed for campaign speech deemed inflammatory or discriminatory. Several parties argued that these sanctions were disproportionate and unduly restricted freedom of political expression during the campaign. A number of ECAP decisions were challenged before the Supreme Court, which, in its role as the second-instance authority, sometimes upheld ECAP's reasoning but in other cases annulled or reduced the fines on grounds of insufficient justification or lack of proportionality. These cases highlighted ongoing legal tensions between campaign regulation and the constitutional and ECHR-protected right to freedom of expression, underscoring the need for clearer and more predictable sanctioning standards.

8. Citizen and international observers

55. Chapter IX of the Law No. 03/L-073 on General Elections establishes provisions for the accreditation of election observers. It grants the right to request accreditation to certified political entities, non-governmental organisations, governmental and intergovernmental organisations, international organisations specialised in elections or human rights protection, as well as representatives of foreign countries. According to Election Regulation No. 08/2024, accredited observers are entitled to significant rights, including the ability to monitor all stages of the electoral process – from preparations to post-election activities. Observers may submit written comments to election commissions, oversee ballot handling and counting procedures, and receive relevant documentation related to the election process. They are also empowered to report any violations of electoral regulations.

9. Election day

56. According to the law, voters whose names appear on the voters list but who, for objective reasons, cannot vote at their assigned polling station are permitted to vote at any conditional polling center in any municipality for the Assembly of Kosovo elections. With new regulations aimed at improving the accuracy of the voters list, the CEC has decided to gradually phase out conditional voting. For the 28 December 2025 elections, as was the case in February 2025, there was only one conditional polling center per municipality.

57. The new legal framework doubled the number of preference votes voters could cast – from five to ten candidates. This decision was criticised by the main citizen observer coalition, which noted that “in addition to doubling the time needed to count these votes, the potential for manipulation of citizens' choices by commissioners increases, especially in cases where voters mark fewer than ten candidates.” Furthermore, analysis of previous voting patterns did not indicate a need to increase the number of preference votes. Observers cautioned that this change could negatively affect the number of women elected to the Assembly of Kosovo, as candidate lists are reordered in descending order based on the number of votes each candidate receives.

58. Under the law, at the close of voting, PSCs are required to determine results only for political entities; votes for individual candidates within political entities are counted at the Municipal Counting Center (MCC) (see below).

59. On election day, the PACE teams were deployed in Pristina and its surroundings, as well as in Ferizaj/ Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Gračanica/Graçanicë, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mamushë/ Mamuša, Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë e Veriut, Mitrovicë e Jugut/Južna Mitrovica, Sujan/Osojane, Pejë/Peć, Podujevë/Podujevo, Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac and Zllakuqan/Zlokućane.

60. In the limited number of polling stations observed, the delegation found that the elections were generally well-organised and conducted in a smooth, professional manner. Electoral officers – representing both majority and non-majority communities – were well-trained, and a positive atmosphere prevailed at most locations. The delegation also noticed a reduction in invalid ballots, which they attributed to a better understanding and assessment of voters’ intentions.

61. However, there were still some challenges. In several polling stations, electoral materials were only available in Albanian. Access for voters with disabilities also remained a significant issue, as many polling stations were not adequately equipped for their needs. In some cases, voters requiring assistance – such as those who were illiterate – faced difficulties because PSCs required medical records before allowing assistance. The delegation observed that some PSCs were strict in requiring these documents, which led some voters to refrain from voting. In contrast, at other locations, voters needing assistance were allowed to vote even without providing the required documentation. The CEC had left it to the PSCs to assess the situation of those in need of assistance. It is recommended that these regulations be reviewed to promote a more inclusive process. Regrettably, in one polling station, the electoral administration did not allow a PACE observer team to be present during the vote counting.

10. Developments after election day

10.1. Counting of preferential votes

62. In Kosovo’s electoral system, voters select a party list and can also indicate their preferred individual candidates on the same list, with up to ten preferential votes allowed. These preferential votes are counted at the MCCs, which serve a dual function: they verify the party-level results forms completed at polling stations

after the ballots are counted, and they enter the candidate preferences into the results system. This procedure, introduced in 2023, has been questioned by civil society representatives, who had raised concerns about the potential for manipulation.

63. While the counting of votes attributed to parties on election day generally proceeded without major issues, serious concerns arose regarding the counting of preferential votes at the 38 MCCs. This stage of the process was not directly observed by the PACE delegation; the presence of domestic observers was more limited and, in some cases, they were absent. The following information is based on reports from media and local sources.

64. The counting process concluded on 3 January 2026. However, on 13 January, after a review of a 2% sample of verified votes uncovered manipulation of votes for certain candidates, the CEC initiated a recount.

65. On 19 January, the CEC decided to recount votes from all polling stations in all 38 municipalities. This decision came after a recount conducted in ten municipalities – covering 36% of the 2 557 ballot boxes – revealed manipulation of votes for candidates during the initial count. The recount was prompted by allegations, leaked from MCCs, of manipulation involving preferential votes. These allegations suggested that such manipulation took place through tacit agreements among party representatives present at the counting centers, particularly during periods when civil society observers were not monitoring the counting of votes for candidates.

66. On 23 January 2026, authorities announced the detention of 109 individuals on suspicion of falsifying election results, as well as engaging in pressure, threats and bribery. Media reports indicated that the Chief Prosecutor of the Basic Prosecution Office in Prizren emphasised that each of the four main political parties had sent their preferred individuals to the counting centers, believing they could manipulate the process without detection by the justice system. He further stated that such manipulation would not have been possible without the collusion of commissioners appointed by the country's four largest parties. According to the prosecutor, more than 6 000 votes were falsified for a single candidate, and over 68 000 votes were tampered with at the Prizren counting center alone.

67. While the overall party results changed very little, the recount led to significant reshuffling of candidate rankings. The State Prosecutor's Office initiated legal proceedings following suspicions of vote manipulation that emerged during the recount process. The national elections co-ordinator instructed the chief prosecutors of all basic prosecution offices in municipalities where recounts had been completed to gather information and evidence of any criminal offenses related to the electoral process. These investigations also extended to candidates.

68. According to data provided to the delegation by the Regional Directorate of Police on 3 March 2026 for Gjakovë/Đakovica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Pejë/Peć, and Prizren, there were 130 open investigations. As part of these investigations, 1 237 interviews were conducted, 628 people were arrested, and 239 were detained under Article 216 of the Criminal Code of Kosovo for falsification of voting results.

69. The use of preferential votes is intended to allow voters to choose the candidates with the broadest support within a party; the manipulation of these votes undermines voters' free choice. It instead enables party leadership to boost their favoured candidates, thereby defeating the main purpose of ranked voting. Such manipulation constitutes a serious breach of the right to a free vote.

70. The NGO Democracy in action noted that "although the recount restored the technical integrity of the final results and did not produce substantial changes in the distribution of mandates among political entities, the scale of corrections – exceeding 240 000 preferential votes in total – significantly affected public perceptions of the credibility of election administration. The transparency of the recount process at the Counting and Results Centre, including live streaming and detailed publication of data, contributed to stabilising the situation and consolidating the final results".

71. In light of these developments, the Bureau of PACE decided to send a post-electoral technical mission scheduled on 17 April 2026, consisting of the Head and Deputy Head of the delegation, to gather first-hand information and report back to the Bureau. The programme is attached (see Appendix 4). Due to a session in the Assembly of Kosovo, we were unable to meet with representatives of the political parties.During our visit to Pristina, it was confirmed that large-scale manipulation of preferential votes had taken place, affecting around 240 000 votes. In Prizren, one candidate alone received 7,000 additional votes. The manipulation did not affect the distribution of seats in the Assembly, however it affected distribution of votes within the party list. According to the CEC, only a limited number of discrepancies could be attributed to mistakes; the extensive mismatches in preferential votes were clearly the result of intentional manipulation. The information we

gathered indicated that this manipulation was driven by individual candidates rather than by political parties. The prosecution office found no evidence of an agreement involving political parties. At the time of our visit, investigations were ongoing, including inquiries into possible political corruption, bribery, or intimidation. We concluded that institutions responsible for electoral matters - the CEC, the police, the Special Co-ordinator for elections within the prosecution office, as well as civil society organisations and online media - responded promptly and in a co-ordinated manner as soon as the irregularities were identified, leading to a full recount of all preferential votes. The final results were not contested. Many interlocutors acknowledged that increasing the number of preferential votes from five to ten - introduced in 2023 at the request of the opposition party, PDK - led to several problems. These included lengthier counting procedures, logistical challenges, and an increased risk of manipulation. Furthermore, for the 28 December early elections, the timing of the counting of the preferential votes - at the very end of December - and scarce resources of civil society organisations, limited the ability of both domestic and international observers to monitor the counting process of preferential votes effectively. Additionally, after the party list votes were counted, the electoral materials were transported to the MCCs for the counting of preferential votes. The combination of these factors created opportunities for manipulation. All interlocutors agreed that these incidents were serious and widespread, significantly undermining trust in the electoral process. Authorities must consider additional safeguards to ensure that preferential vote counting is both transparent and credible. Several proposals were put forward, such as reducing the number of preferential votes, introducing technological tools to scan and publish ballot papers (allowing candidates to appeal results based on evidence), implementing electronic ballot counting (with appropriate software and training), counting preferential votes at polling stations (instead of at MCCs), or centralising the counting using electoral administration staff instead of party representatives.

10.2. Certification of election results

72. On 9 February 2026, the CEC certified the results of the 28 December elections. The voter turnout was 47.68%, slightly higher than in the February 2025 elections (46.54%).

73. The CEC completed the recount of ballots from 2 557 polling stations in late January, but initially withheld certification of the results for the Serb List. This decision prompted strong reactions from the international community. Following an appeal to the ECAP, the CEC was ordered to publish the results for the Serb List.

74. The results of the elections were as follows:

Party	Percentage of votes	Seats
Vetëvendosje (LVV)	51.10	57
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	20.19	22
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	13.24	15
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	5.50	6
Reserved seats for the non-majority communities		
Lista Srpska	4.49	9
For Freedom, Justice and Survival	0.51	1
Turkish Democratic Party of Kosovo	0.57	2
Vakat Coalition	0.42	1
New Democratic Party	0.41	1
New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo	0.29	1
Social Democratic Union	0.27	1
Egyptian Liberal Party	0.24	1
Ashkali Social Democratic Party	0.22	1
Unique Gorani Party	0.16	1
Progressive Movement of Kosovar Roma	0.12	1
TOTAL	100	120

75. The certification of the results paved the way for the constitution of the Assembly of Kosovo on 11 February 2026, followed by the election of the President and five Vice-Presidents of the Assembly – including a representative from Srpska Lista – and the formation of the government (Kurti III) on the same day. Albin Kurti was confirmed as Prime Minister, with 66 members of the Assembly voting in favor and 49 against.

76. Following the 2025 elections, the CEC adopted several key recommendations based on lessons learned from recent electoral processes. These included proposals to review and harmonise the rules on preferential voting, revise deadlines for handling election complaints, extend the timeframe for organising early elections from 45 to 60 days, clarify legal provisions regarding assisted voting, and update deadlines for collecting postal ballots from the diaspora. The CEC also suggested introducing new technologies to improve election integrity. This includes piloting digital ballot counting through scanning systems and exploring electronic voter identification, with the aim of increasing security, transparency, and providing real-time turnout information.

10.3. Post-electoral institutional developments

77. The term of the incumbent President of Kosovo, Ms Vjosa Osmani, expired on 5 April 2026, five years after she took office. The Assembly of Kosovo is, according to the Constitution, tasked to elect a new President 30 days prior to the end of the current president's term. A candidate is required to receive at least 80 votes, equivalent to two-thirds of the 120 members of the Assembly, in order to be elected in the first round. However, if no candidate succeeds during the first two rounds, a third round is held between the top two candidates of the second round, and the requirement is reduced to a simple majority of 61 votes. A 2012 ruling of the Constitutional Court also requires that two-thirds of all members of the Assembly take part in the vote. If the third round does not produce a successful candidate either, the Assembly is dissolved, with new elections taking place within 45 days.

78. President Osmani announced her intention to run for another term; however, Vetëvendosje, the governing party, nominated its own candidates – foreign affairs Minister and former President of the Assembly Glauk Konjufca and Fatmire Mulhaxha Kollcaku, member of the Assembly – to ensure compliance with rules that require more than one candidate for the presidential vote to be valid. This move caused frustration among opposition parties, who accused Vetëvendosje of lacking efforts to reach political consensus. In protest, opposition Assembly members boycotted a pivotal session of the Assembly, which prevented it from achieving a quorum and stalled the presidential election.

79. On 25 March 2026, the Constitutional Court intervened, declaring that President Osmani's order to dissolve the Assembly did not produce any legal effect. The Court stipulated that the Assembly now has 34 days from the date of the ruling to elect a new President. Should it fail to do so, the Constitution mandates the automatic dissolution of the Assembly and requires new elections to be held within 45 days. The Court's decision took effect immediately. If the Assembly fails to elect a president by 28 April 2026, a third election to the Assembly in 15 months will be inevitable.

11. Conclusions and recommendations

80. The vote on 28 December 2025 represented Kosovo's fourth electoral process in 2025, following the politically inconclusive Assembly elections in February 2025 and two rounds of local elections in October and November 2025. These early elections were prompted by a prolonged political stalemate – including delayed constitution of the Assembly of Kosovo, failure to form a government, and inability to adopt a budget – and were conducted within shortened electoral deadlines after a brief, subdued campaign. Notably, the elections were held on a date that coincided with the return of a significant number of diaspora members for end-of-year celebrations.

81. Despite the polarised political climate, the PACE delegation welcomed the smooth and professional conduct of these early elections. The process was technically well-prepared despite tight deadlines and was generally considered inclusive. Positive developments included a softer campaign tone, the absence of formal complaints regarding hate speech, and of serious incidents.

82. In the limited number of polling stations observed, the delegation found that the elections were conducted smoothly and professionally, with well-trained electoral officers and a positive atmosphere in polling stations administered by staff from both majority and non-majority communities. The delegation also observed a reduction in invalid ballot papers, attributed to improved assessment of voters' expressed will.

83. The delegation welcomed the active participation of women in the polling stations visited. Although parties fulfilled the formal gender quota requirement, further progress is needed to ensure equal campaigning opportunities, media and social media exposure, and realistic chances of election for female candidates.

84. The delegation also noted some improvement in modalities for out-of-country voting, both at diplomatic premises and through postal voting.

85. During the election period, the delegation observed several key issues that need urgent attention from the authorities:

– The CEC repeatedly refused to certify or publish results for the main Kosovo Serb party, Srpska Lista, but these decisions were later overturned by higher bodies. This raised concerns about the impartiality and fairness of the electoral authorities, especially regarding the rights of non-majority communities.

– The delegation also noted gaps in campaign financing oversight, questions about balancing free speech with the need to sanction hate speech, and concerns about media independence and journalist safety.

– With over 2.1 million registered voters in a country of 1.5 million, the voters list remains significantly inflated, undermining public confidence and transparency in the electoral process.

– Some polling stations lacked materials in languages of the non-majority communities and had poor accessibility for voters with disabilities and others needing assistance. In one case, a PACE observer team was not allowed to observe the vote count, highlighting the need for greater inclusivity and transparency.

86. However, the most critical issue arising from the 28 December elections was the large-scale manipulation of preferential votes during the counting process. This was reportedly carried out with either a tacit agreement or, at the very least, co-ordinated actions among representatives of all major parties at the local level. The scale and seriousness of the allegations prompted the CEC to order a recount of all preferential votes and sparked extensive criminal investigations. Although these irregularities appeared to be concentrated in specific municipalities, they nonetheless undermine the credibility of the electoral administration and erode public trust in the electoral process. The Assembly urges the authorities to complete ongoing investigations, fully clarify the circumstances, and identify those responsible. It strongly calls on the authorities of Kosovo to take decisive action against these practices, as they fundamentally compromise the integrity of democratic elections and the free expression of the will of the voters. The Assembly also calls on all political parties to ensure that all aspects of the electoral process, including the counting of votes, uphold the standards set out in the Venice Commission's Code of good practice in electoral matters.

87. These early elections were intended to resolve a political deadlock. The delegation notes that, following the elections, the Assembly was constituted, its leadership was elected, and a government was formed, thereby contributing to the restoration of functional institutions. However, the delegation urges all parties in the Assembly to act responsibly in electing a president and maintaining effective institutions, in order to avoid plunging the country into another cycle of elections.

88. The PACE delegation emphasises that elections and their observation extend beyond polling day; they are a multi-stage process that must be analysed and evaluated in order to assess the entire electoral experience.

89. The Assembly notes with concern that a number of irregularities and shortcomings must be addressed by the country's authorities as soon as possible, and that the recommendations from the previous election observation report for the elections of 9 February 2025 remain valid. The PACE delegation recognises the initiatives undertaken by the CEC and the recommendations adopted, and it encourages the authorities to continue working on these issues in consultation with the Venice Commission.

90. The delegation therefore encourages the authorities of Kosovo to address several key issues to further strengthen the integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral process, including:

– ensuring the complete de-politicisation of the CEC, so that election management bodies not only act impartially but are also perceived as impartial;

– updating the voters list based on accurate and up to date data;

– to prevent manipulation, reviewing the procedures for counting preferential votes and take appropriate measures to guarantee the transparency and integrity of the electoral process, thereby upholding the free choice expressed by voters;

– guaranteeing equitable ethnic representation in local election commissions, especially in municipalities with non-majority communities;

– providing access to election materials and election administration documents in both official languages and languages used by other communities;

– further encouraging women's participation in political life;

– improving accessibility for voters with disabilities at polling stations, ensuring consistent interpretation of legal provisions, and facilitating the exercise of voting rights for persons with disabilities;

– strengthening the legal framework, particularly regarding the transparency of party and campaign financing and the declaration of assets by candidates;

– ensuring civil society can access detailed financial transactions of political parties;

– adopting legislation on media ownership disclosure;

– ensuring that all electoral officers are aware of international observers' rights to be present at all stages of the electoral process, including the counting;

– review the modalities of out-of-country voting to secure equality of suffrage and guarantee the electoral integrity at home and abroad.

91. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission are prepared to work with the authorities of Kosovo to improve the electoral framework and strengthen the capacities of the electoral administration, especially by addressing the issues outlined in this report.

Appendix 1 – Composition of the ad hoc committee

Based on the proposals by the political groups of the Assembly, the ad hoc committee was composed as follows:

Chairperson: Mr Yunus EMRE

Vice-Chairperson: Mr Georgios STAMATIS

Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group (SOC)

– Mr Yunus EMRE, Türkiye

Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD)

– Mr Georgios STAMATIS, Greece

European Conservatives, Patriots & Affiliates (ECPA)

– Mr Malte KAUFMANN, Germany

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

– Mr Mehmet AKALIN, Türkiye
– Ms Sabina ĆUDIĆ, Bosnia and Herzegovina
– Ms Liliana TANGUY, France

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL)

– ZZ

Venice Commission

– Ms Florence GANOUX, Expert
– Mr Kaghani GULIYEV, Legal advisor, Secretariat of the Venice Commission

Secretariat

– Ms Sylvie AFFHOLDER, Head of the Elections Division, Secretary of the ad hoc committee
– Mr Bogdan TORCĂTORIU, Senior Elections Officer, Elections Division
– Ms Carine ROLLER-KAUFMAN, Assistant, Elections Division
– Ms Amila BERKOVIC, Assistant, Elections Division

Appendix 2 – Programme of the meetings of the PACE Electoral Observation Mission

Saturday, 27 December 2025

08:00-08:45 PACE delegation meeting:
- Welcome by Yunus Emre, Head of Delegation
- Presentation by Tankut Soykan, Deputy Head of the Council of Europe Office in Pristina
- Presentation by Florence Ganoux, expert of the Venice Commission
- Presentation of the programme by the Secretariat

08:45-09:30 Meeting with the international community:

EU Office in Kosovo / EU Special Representative
- Boguslaw Gertruda, Head of EU Integration, Political and Press & Information Section, EU Office in Kosovo
- Cyprien François, Chief political Adviser, EU Office
- Blerta Bejtullahu, Senior Political Analyst, EU Office

EU Election Expert Mission
- Konrad Ozlewski, Team Leader

Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Officer in Charge, UNMIK
- Milbert Dongjoon Shin, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Officer in Charge

OSCE Mission in Kosovo
- Pascale Roussy, Director of the Democratization Department
- Ilir Haziri, National Elections Adviser
- Marzia Cimmino, Deputy Head of Office of Political Affairs and Communications

UN agencies
- Dudley Tarlton, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative and the Officer in Charge

KFOR
- Thuruban Thuchchathanan, Special Advisor

09:30-10:30 Meeting with civil society representatives:
- Albert Krasniqi, Democracy Plus
- Venera Gashi, Democracy for Development
- Miodrag Miličević, Aktiv
- Adelina Berisha, Kosovo Women's Network

10:30-11:30 Meeting with media representatives:
- Lorik Arifaj, Head of Election Team RTK, and Mendu Hysa, Deputy Head of Election team
- Xhemajl Rexha, Chair of the Association of Kosovo Journalists
- Flutura Kusari, CoE media expert
- Mentor Gjergjaj, Editor-in-Chief, Reporteri

11:30-12:00 Meeting with Besnik Berisha, acting Chairperson of the Independent Media Commission

12:00-12:30 Meeting with Zenel Leku, Chairperson of the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel

12:30 Meeting with drivers and linguistic assistants

14:30-17:40 Meeting with leaders and representatives of main political parties

14:30-15:00 – Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (Self-Determination Movement – LVV): Alim Rama, Organisational Secretary

	15:00-15:30 – Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partia Demokratike e Kosovë PDK): Ilir Gashi, member of the Central Election Commission
	16:50-17:40 – The Serb List (Srpska Lista): Igor Simić, vice-president and spokesperson
17:40 -18:15	Meeting with Kreshnik Radoniqi, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission (CEC)

Sunday, 28 December 2025

06:30-24:00	Observation of the opening of the polling stations, of the voting and of the counting (at 19:00)
17:00-18:15	Feedback session

Monday, 29 December 2025

09:00-10:00	Meeting of the delegation (debriefing and preparation of a statement)
14:00	Press Conference

Appendix 3 – Press release of the International Election Observation Mission

PACE observers welcome smooth early elections in Kosovo*[4] and urge all stakeholders to help restore functional institutions

A delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has welcomed the smooth and professional conduct of the early elections to the Assembly of Kosovo, expressing hope that all political stakeholders will demonstrate responsibility in restoring functional institutions.

The 28 December vote marked the fourth electoral process in Kosovo in 2025, following the inconclusive Assembly elections in February and the two rounds of local elections in October and November 2025. These early elections were prompted by a prolonged political stalemate – including the delayed constitution of the Assembly, failure to form a government and the inability to adopt a budget – and took place within shortened electoral deadlines after a brief, low-key campaign.

Despite the polarised political climate, the PACE delegation noted that most interlocutors appreciated the campaign's softer tone, the absence of formal complaints regarding hate speech and the lack of serious incidents, which are positive developments.

The delegation noted that the elections were technically well prepared despite short deadlines and generally assessed as inclusive. However, for the fourth time this year, the Central Election Commission (CEC) rejected the certification of the main Kosovo Serb party, Srpska Lista, and their list of candidates – a decision later overturned by the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel and the Supreme Court. This recurring pattern raised concerns about the consistency and impartiality of the electoral administration regarding the certification process.

The PACE delegation, led by Yunus Emre (Türkiye, SOC), was composed of 12 members, including six parliamentarians from four political groups of the PACE and five Council of Europe member states, as well as representatives of the Venice Commission and staff. On election day, the PACE teams were deployed in Pristina and its surroundings, as well as in Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Gračanica/Graçanicë, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mamushë/Mamuša, Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë e Veriut, Mitrovicë e Jugut/Južna Mitrovica, Osojan/Osojane, Pejë/Peć, Podujevë/Podujevo, Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac and Zllakuqan/Zlokućane.

In the limited number of polling stations observed, the delegation found that the elections were conducted smoothly and professionally, with well-trained electoral officers and a positive atmosphere prevailing in polling stations administered by officers from both majority and non-majority communities. The delegation also noted a reduction in invalid ballot papers due to improved assessment of voters' expressed will.

However, in a number of polling stations, electoral materials were not available in languages other than Albanian. Access for disabled persons remained a challenge in many polling stations. Voters requiring assistance during the voting, including illiterate persons, was also an issue at some polling stations. These regulations should be reviewed to allow for a more inclusive approach. Regrettably, in one polling station, the electoral administration did not allow one PACE observer team to be present during the counting.

The delegation welcomed the active involvement of women in the polling stations visited. While parties fulfilled the formal gender quota requirement, further progress is needed regarding equal campaigning opportunities, media and social media exposure and realistic chances of election.

The delegation also acknowledged that the legislation is conducive to democratic elections. However, serious gaps remain, notably regarding the regulation and oversight of campaign finance. The delegation was also informed about fines deemed disproportionate, imposed for campaign speech considered inflammatory or discriminatory. This has prompted a debate on balancing the protection of freedom of expression with the need to sanction hate speech. While media coverage was seen as balanced and compliant with regulations, the delegation heard concerns regarding political sponsorship of the media and the safety of journalists.

With 2.1 million voters registered in a population of 1.5 million, the issue of inflated voter lists – stemming notably from the lack of effective deregistration mechanisms for emigrants and the absence of systematic harmonisation between census data and the civil registry – remained unaddressed in 2025. Such issues may raise concerns under international standards regarding the accuracy and credibility of voter registration and should be addressed by the authorities.

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4. *Throughout this text, all reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population shall be understoodin full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo..

The elections were also notable for being held on a date that coincided with the return of a significant number of diaspora members for end-of-year celebrations. Some modalities allowing out-of-country voting at diplomatic premises or by postal voting were also improved.

These early elections were intended to end a political deadlock. The delegation calls on all stakeholders to demonstrate responsibility in restoring functional institutions ahead of the election of the President of Kosovo in spring 2026 by the Assembly of Kosovo, and to uphold the democratic and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the voters. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission stand ready to co-operate in further improving the electoral framework and strengthening the capacities of stakeholders responsible for managing elections.

The PACE delegation was in Kosovo from 26 to 29 December 2025. It met with leaders and representatives of the main political parties (including parties representing non-majority communities), the Chairperson of the Central Election Commission, the Chairperson of the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel, as well as representatives of the international community, NGOs and the media. The delegation's election observation report will be presented during a PACE part-session in 2026.

Appendix 4 – Programme of the post-election mission – Pristina, 17 April 2026

PACE Delegation:

– Yunus Emre (Türkiye, SOC), Chairperson of the ad hoc committee

– Georgios Stamatis (Greece, EPP/CD), Vice-Chairperson of the ad hoc committee

Secretariat: Sylvie Affholder, Head of the PACE Elections Division

Friday 17 April 2026

08:00-09:00	Working breakfast with representatives of the international community (*) – Pascale Roussy, Director, Democratization Department, OSCE Mission in Kosovo – Cyprien François, Acting Deputy EU Ambassador, EU Office in Kosovo – George Fakhry, Chief of the Political Affairs Office, UNMIK – Sara Barbieri, Senior political advisor, EULEX
09:15-09:45	Meeting with civil society organisations (*) – Eugen Cakolli, Democracy in Action – Qemajl Marmullakaj, Kosovo Law Institute – Mexhide Demolli, Lëvizja FOL – Venera Gashi, Democracy4Development – Albert Krasniqi, Democracy Plus
09:45-10:30	Meeting with the Regional Directorate of the police and representatives of the Minister of interior – Captain Bajram Shabani, Kosovo Police – Vesa Ferizi, representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
10:30-11:15	Meeting with the electoral administration – Kreshnik Radoniqi, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission (CEC) – Zenel Leku, Chairperson of the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP)
11:30-12:15	Meeting with the Special Co-ordinator of Elections of the Prosecution Office and representatives of the Minister of Justice – Laura Pula, Special Co-ordinator of the Prosecution Office – Lulzim Beqiri, Representative from the Ministry of Justice
12:30-13:15	Meeting with Ardian Gola, Deputy Speaker of the Assembly of Kosovo
19:00	Dinner hosted by H.E. Sabri Tunç Angılı, Ambassador of Türkiye, with representatives of the diplomatic community (*)

(*) Meetings organised by the Council of Europe Secretariat