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# ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT ELECTIONS FOR THE ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVO

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION



FEBRUARY 9, 2025

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# List of acronyms

AAK	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
AIP	Agency for Information and Privacy
ARC	Civil Registration Agency
ASK	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEC Secretariat	Secretariat of the Central Election Commission
CRC	Counting and Results Centre
DGJC	Department of Civil Status
DiA	Democracy in Action
DP	Department of Pensions
DPD	Document Production Department
ECAP	Election Complaints and Appeals Panel
GI-SPO	Citizens' Initiative for Freedom, Justice, and Survival
IRDK	New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo
JGP	United Gorani Party
KDTP	Kosovo Turkish Democratic Party
KDI	Kosovo Democratic Institute
KJC	Kosovo Judicial Council
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo
LTO	Long-Term Observers
LVV	Vetëvendosje Movement

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MCC	Municipal Counting Centre
MEC	Municipal Election Commission
MoFA&D	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NDS	New Democratic Party
NISMA	Social Democratic Initiative
ORCPSP	Office for the Registration, Certification and Financial Control of Political Entities
OSCE	OSCE Mission in Kosovo
PAI	Coalition of Democratic Ashkali Party of Kosovo and Movement for Cooperation
PDAK-LpB	Partia Rome e Bashkuar e Kosovës
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo
PLE	Egyptian Liberal Party
PREBK	United Roma Party of Kosovo
PSC	Polling Station Council
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
SC	Supreme Court
SL	Serbian List
STO	Short-Term Observers
VAKAT	VAKAT Coalition

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The coalition of domestic election observation organizations, Democracy in Action (DiA), considers that the parliamentary elections of 9 February were conducted in line with democratic standards for free, competitive, and fair elections. The administration of election operations was generally orderly, with the exception of the announcement of results and the candidate vote counting process, which was marked by significant technical and organizational delays and issues.

The voting and counting processes on election day were carried out in a generally calm and democratic atmosphere, characterized by relatively high voter turnout. However, the voting process was accompanied by several irregularities and violations, primarily of a procedural nature. No serious incidents were reported during voting that could have jeopardized the integrity of the elections.

Technical problems with the Central Election Commission's (CEC) electronic results publication system, which appeared only a few hours after voting ended, caused considerable confusion and decreased public confidence in the transparency of the process. This situation led to the use of manual methods for processing and comparing results, as mathematically impossible outcomes, inaccurate turnout figures, and other issues with results forms had been previously reported.

The restrained approach of major political parties is commendable, as they calmly acknowledged and accepted the preliminary results for political entities despite the problems with the electronic system.

The counting of votes for candidates in the Municipal Counting Centres (MCCs) began with significant delays due to the lack of necessary equipment and software, weak technical oversight, and poor coordination of field staff. In some cases, the counting did not begin until 16 February, although by law it should have started on 10 February. Nevertheless, after overcoming initial procedural confusion, the counting process was assessed as

transparent and generally well organized. Observers reported instances where previously invalid ballots from polling stations were re-evaluated and declared valid, reflecting shortcomings in the training and understanding of vote validity criteria by polling station commissioners.

The election campaign was the first to last a full 30 days, resulting in a high pace of campaign activities and increased engagement of political parties both on the ground and online. During this 30-day campaign, a record high of over €200,000 in expenditures was recorded by political parties and their candidates on digital platforms.

The lack of legal regulation for pre-campaign activities created an unregulated space for political parties to engage in electoral promotion before the official start of the campaign, allowing them to avoid financial reporting and sanctions during this period.

The campaign was dynamic, engaging, and issue-based. Although the political discourse was intense—especially from the ruling party—it resulted in a record number of fines imposed by the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP), amounting to over €600,000 in total.

Out-of-country voting was the operation most affected by recent legal changes, which expanded the diaspora's voting options to include both physical voting at diplomatic missions and postal voting from abroad. Interest among citizens abroad was high, with over 100,000 registered to vote. The total number of ballot envelopes received from abroad and confirmed by the postal service was 68,715. Of the 20,324 eligible voters who could vote in-person at diplomatic missions (across 43 polling stations), 15,348 exercised their right to vote.

Out-of-country voting was marred by political interference from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD) at nearly every stage. Failures and problems related to the transport of ballots raised serious concerns about the security and integrity of the process.



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Significant discrepancies were noted in the results of postal voting. While Vetëvendosje (LVV) dominated in-person voting at diplomatic missions, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) performed exceptionally well in postal voting, with unusually high percentages for certain candidates. Despite the rejection of LVV's complaints by ECAP and the Supreme Court, these findings raised suspicions of possible manipulation or irregular voting patterns. A criminal investigation into this matter has been authorized by the Basic Prosecution Office in Prishtina and is ongoing.

The decision-making process of election management bodies was generally consensual, although sensitive issues sparked disputes among members—particularly between representatives of the ruling party and others. In some cases, CEC's decision-making was accompanied by broad interpretations of its legal competencies and tendencies to act beyond its mandate, compromising institutional independence and the perception of impartiality.

Although these elections were regular in terms of the legal calendar, giving the CEC more time for planning and implementation, delays were observed in key processes, including the approval of Municipal Election Commission (MEC) compositions, the establishment of MCCs, and the publication of out-of-country polling station locations.

One of the main technical challenges of these elections was the issue of indelible ink. The procurement process for this material faced delays and quality problems, resulting in reports that the ink could be easily removed from voters' fingers. Furthermore, the very use of ink as a voter-marking method was criticized by civil society organizations and the Information and Privacy Agency (IPA), which considered it a violation of vote secrecy.

Within the election organization, the CEC adopted several decisions criticized for undermining the secrecy of the vote. One such decision was to place voting booths in front-facing positions, which was deemed problematic due to the potential exposure of voters' choices. This decision was later reversed following pressure from civil society. To increase transparency and prevent manipulation, the CEC decided to install cameras in polling stations to record the voting process.

During the campaign, the media landscape was polarized, marked by two main developments: the ruling party maintained a consistently confrontational stance toward journalists, while some media outlets were perceived as biased in their coverage and reporting.

A total of 28 political entities with 1,280 candidates applied for certification in these elections. The CEC approved all applications except for that of Srpska Lista, whose rejection sparked broad debate and concerns about equal access to the electoral race. In this case, the CEC unlawfully rejected certification despite a recommendation to certify by the Office for Registration, Certification and Financial Oversight of Political Entities (ORCFPE). The decision was later overturned by ECAP and the Supreme Court, which ordered the certification of this political entity, exposing how political considerations can outweigh legal principles in certain aspects of election administration.

The 9 February 2025 parliamentary elections were monitored by a significant number of observers, including political party representatives, civil society organizations, international missions, and media outlets. In total, over 20,000 observers were accredited to monitor the election process at all levels.

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# 1. MISSION AND METHODOLOGY OF DiA

Democracy in Action (DiA) is a coalition of non-governmental organizations in Kosovo that promotes free and fair elections through systematic monitoring of electoral processes, voter education, and active advocacy for electoral reforms. For the 9 February 2025 parliamentary elections, DiA engaged approximately 700 volunteers to ensure a comprehensive and objective observation.

This report presents a detailed assessment of the electoral process, beginning with the preparatory period following the announcement of the election date by the President of the Republic, covering the activities of institutions responsible for election administration, the voting process, vote counting—including operations in the Municipal Counting Centres (MCCs) and the Counting and Results Centre (CRC)—the adjudication of electoral complaints, and the announcement of the final results.

For the electoral campaign period, DiA prepared separate monitoring reports,<sup>1</sup> addressing the overall conduct of the campaign, political discourse on social media, and the monitoring of media coverage during the campaign. This period was monitored by 44 long-term observers (LTOs) who followed public activities across the territory, including areas with a Serb-majority population. The sessions of the Central Election Commission (CEC) and Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) were also closely monitored.

On election day, more than 600 volunteers were deployed in the field, of whom 500 were engaged using the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) methodology—an internationally recognized approach based on a proven statistical sample. Simultaneously, around 50 additional observers, organized into mobile teams, monitored the general atmosphere at and around polling stations,

while 50 other volunteers worked at the Call Centre, collecting, processing, and analyzing real-time data from the field.

Short-term observers (STOs) were previously trained by specialized teams on the monitoring methodology, electoral procedures, and online data reporting. Field reports were processed immediately into a dedicated electronic database, enabling the publication of press releases and media updates throughout election day.

Complementarily, DiA's mobile teams monitored the counting process at several MCCs and at the CRC. Additionally, DiA's legal team continuously monitored the handling of electoral complaints by the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) and the Supreme Court.

The methodology applied in this observation fully adheres to international standards for democratic elections.

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<sup>1</sup> The methodology of these reports will be elaborated separately within each individual report.

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## 2. POLITICAL CONTEXT

Since declaring independence in 2008, Kosovo has experienced a prolonged period of political instability. All parliamentary elections held between 2008 and 2021 were snap elections, reflecting a political culture marked by frequent crises, the inability to ensure institutional stability, and recurring interventions by the Constitutional Court in interpreting the processes of forming and dissolving governments.

The 9 February 2025 elections, the sixth since independence, marked a turning point, representing the first instance where the electoral process was held in full accordance with the regular legal timeline. The government led by the Vetëvendosje Movement (VV), headed by Prime Minister Albin Kurti, although securing over 50% of the vote in the 2021 elections, continuously struggled to maintain a stable parliamentary majority. This undermined the implementation of its governing agenda, both in domestic policy and international relations.

This period was also characterized by internal political fragmentation. Sensitive issues such as the justice system reform and the adoption of the Civil Code triggered significant internal disagreements within the VV parliamentary group, leading to the departure of several MPs. As a result, the government's parliamentary position weakened, forcing it to increasingly rely on the votes of non-majority community representatives to pass laws and critical decisions. In this context, the parliamentary opposition—composed of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), and Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)—maintained a unified stance against the government, systematically refusing to cooperate with the ruling majority. The opposition challenged many government initiatives—some of which ended up before the Constitutional Court—and frequently abstained from participating in votes, fostering a climate of deep political polarization throughout the mandate.

In terms of foreign policy, the EU-facilitated dialogue with Serbia continued, culminating in the signing of the Ohrid Agreement in March 2023. However, the obligations stemming from the agreement—especially the commitment to establish the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities—became a major point of political contention within Kosovo. This issue deepened the political and public divide, with the government facing strong internal pressure from the opposition and civil society, which largely viewed the agreement as detrimental to the country.

One of the most critical challenges of the outgoing government's four-year term was the situation in northern Kosovo. Tensions reached one of their highest levels since independence. In late 2022, all political and institutional representatives of the Serb community—including MPs, cabinet members, mayors, municipal assembly members, judges, prosecutors, and police officers—resigned collectively, creating a vacuum in institutional and administrative functioning in the Serb-majority municipalities. The snap local elections organized in April 2023 failed to restore stability, as they were widely boycotted by the Serb community.

The crisis escalated dramatically with the terrorist attack in Banjska in September 2023, when an armed Serbian paramilitary group attacked Kosovo Police forces, resulting in the killing of a police sergeant. Kosovo's institutions deemed the incident as orchestrated by networks directly linked to the Government of Serbia and the Serbian List.

These political developments—particularly the successes and failures of the Kurti government, its reform agenda, sovereignty policies, confrontations with the opposition, and the crisis in the north—shaped the political climate and set the tone for the February 2025 parliamentary election campaign.

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## 3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework for parliamentary elections in Kosovo is grounded in the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and a set of specific laws that collectively regulate the administration, operation, and integrity of elections. Ahead of the 2025 parliamentary elections, this framework underwent several important changes, most notably with the adoption of the new Law on General Elections in June 2023 and earlier amendments to the Law on the Financing of Political Entities in 2022. The framework is complemented by the Criminal Code and various sub-legal acts issued by the Central Election Commission (CEC), forming a complex legal system aimed at ensuring democratic standards in electoral processes.

Kosovo applies a proportional electoral system with open lists, where the entire country is considered a single electoral district. The Assembly of Kosovo has 120 seats, 20 of which are guaranteed for non-majority communities (10 for the Serb community and 10 for other communities). For political parties and coalitions competing for the 100 open seats, a 5% electoral threshold applies nationwide. This threshold does not apply to political entities contesting the guaranteed non-majority seats.

Despite public expectations for a more comprehensive electoral reform, the 2023 legislative changes focused primarily on technical and administrative matters and did not address some of the core deficiencies that have previously undermined electoral transparency and integrity.

One of the most notable changes was the expansion of out-of-country voting options. For the first time, physical voting was made possible at Kosovo's diplomatic missions abroad, alongside postal voting through ballot boxes placed at these missions. This innovation aimed to facilitate diaspora participation while reducing the risk of abuse associated with traditional postal voting, which in the past had triggered technical issues and raised suspicions of manipulation.

However, other amendments raised serious concerns. The most controversial change was the lowering of eligibility standards for candidates. The new law permits candidacy for individuals sentenced to alternative measures or fines, restricting the ban solely to those with effective prison sentences longer than one year. Given the high number of corruption-related cases in Kosovo that result in alternative sentences, this provision effectively allows individuals convicted of corruption offenses to run for office, potentially undermining the integrity of the Assembly and public trust in political institutions.

Another significant change was the reintroduction of preferential voting for up to 10 candidates, a system initially applied in the 2007 elections. Although the intention was to broaden voters' choice, the reform brought serious practical challenges. The counting of preferential votes outside polling stations—namely in the Municipal Counting Centres—had a direct impact on the speed of election administration. Instead of adding value to the process, it led to delays in publishing results, undermining the transparency of the vote count and public confidence.

A further critical amendment concerned the dismissal procedure for the Chairperson and members of the CEC. Unlike the previous system, where such authority was exclusively held by the President, the new law allows dismissal based on a two-thirds majority vote of the CEC members, should there be a finding of institutional integrity breach. While the reform formally strengthens accountability, in practice it risks politicizing the CEC's work and jeopardizing its independence—particularly under politically tense conditions.

Regarding the financing of political entities, the amendments to the Law on the Financing of Political Entities (2022) introduced stricter rules on financial reporting and aimed to enhance transparency in party funding.

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Nevertheless, effective monitoring and control of campaign expenditures remain major challenges, particularly in terms of online and social media spending, where enforcement continues to lag.

In the area of gender equality, the 30% legal quota for women remained in place for both candidate lists and Assembly seats. While this mechanism guarantees a minimum level of female representation, meaningful participation of women in political decision-making remains limited. Various civil society groups and international organizations have emphasized the need for more effective mechanisms to promote women's engagement at senior political and executive levels.

Overall, the legal amendments adopted in the run-up to the 2025 elections only partially addressed the fundamental shortcomings of Kosovo's electoral system. Despite some technical and administrative improvements, major challenges to electoral integrity and transparency persisted. Furthermore, some of the new provisions carry long-term risks that could negatively affect the quality of political representation, the independence of electoral institutions, and public confidence in Kosovo's democratic processes.



Kosovo applies a proportional electoral system with open lists, where the entire country is considered a single electoral district. The Assembly of Kosovo has 120 seats, 20 of which are guaranteed for non-majority communities (10 for the Serb community and 10 for other communities). For political parties and coalitions competing for the 100 open seats, a 5% electoral threshold applies nationwide. This threshold does not apply to political entities contesting the guaranteed non-majority seats.

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## 4. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Based on the applicable constitutional and legal provisions, the body responsible for the preparation, oversight, management, and verification of all actions related to the electoral process, as well as the announcement of results, is the Central Election Commission. In fulfilling its duties and functions, this constitutional institution is assisted by the Secretariat of the CEC.

To ensure efficient preparation and administration of elections, Municipal Election Commissions have been established at the municipal level, functioning in accordance with the Law on General Elections. These commissions are established in each of the 38 municipalities of Kosovo.

The bodies responsible for administering the electoral process on election day are the Polling Station Councils, composed of five to seven members.

On the other hand, the Municipal Counting Centers (MCCs), as defined by law, serve as municipal locations or depots where the verification of votes for political entities is conducted, the counting of ballots for political party candidates is carried out, and the preliminary results for candidate votes are compiled and published. MCCs also receive election materials and serve as training locations for electoral management bodies.

Meanwhile, after election day, the location where conditional vote counting, out-of-country vote counting, and potential recount processes take place is the Counting and Results Center, which operates based on CEC decisions.

### 4.1. Work of the Central Election Commission

The Central Election Commission (CEC) is the constitutional institution responsible for organizing and administering all electoral processes in the Republic of

Kosovo. For the 9 February 2025 parliamentary elections—the first regular elections since the declaration of independence—this institution had, for the first time, a full preparatory period that allowed for early planning and coordinated execution of electoral activities. However, the practical implementation of its responsibilities was accompanied by a series of challenges, delays, and contested decisions, raising concerns about internal politicization, lack of transparency, and interference in technical and administrative matters.

Although election day on 9 February was generally conducted in a calm atmosphere and without serious incidents, the process was undermined by the failure of the CEC's electronic system for publishing preliminary results, leaving the public in the dark until the following day. Additionally, although the counting process for candidate votes was supposed to begin the day after the elections—on 10 February—it had not started even by 11 February 2025, due to what the CEC described as “technical and administrative issues.” In fact, even on 11 February, the CEC announced that the process would only begin in four municipalities.

Since the election date was announced, the CEC held around 35 meetings, approving key decisions for the organization of the elections.

The decision-making process was generally consensual. However, decisions on technical and organizational matters—such as the number of polling stations for out-of-country voting and the certification of political entities—were often accompanied by internal tensions and significant polarization between members representing the ruling party and those from the opposition. In several cases, internal debate went beyond the technical-administrative nature of the topics under discussion, taking on political dimensions that caused delays, confusion, and impacted the clarity of guidance for other electoral structures.

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The most illustrative example is the initial non-certification of the political entity Serbian List in the meeting held on 23 December 2024. Despite the Office for Political Party Registration recommending the certification of the entity in accordance with legal criteria, several CEC members—particularly from Vetëvendosje—voted against, without presenting legal arguments to justify such a rejection. The decision was later overturned by the ECAP and confirmed as unlawful by the Supreme Court. This case highlighted the lack of equal and impartial treatment of electoral subjects and the clear influence of political beliefs in decisions that should have been purely procedural.

Political clashes were also reflected in the decision not to distribute public funds to parliamentary entities for the months of January and February 2025. In the meeting held on 8 January, the recommendation of the Political Party Office for the allocation of funds did not pass, as opposition members did not participate in the vote, while those from the ruling party voted against it due to the inclusion of the Serbian List as a beneficiary. Although one member proposed that the list be voted on separately for each entity, the proposal was not supported. This approach not only prevented the distribution of funds to all parliamentary entities, but also created a dangerous precedent for the politicization of public fund allocation.

During the electoral process, CEC members occasionally interfered in technical decisions that legally fall within the competence of the CEC Secretariat. Such examples include the review of tenders, technical specifications of electoral equipment, and modalities for coordination with other institutions. These interferences affected the efficiency of the CEC's executive body and created internal tensions in institutional functioning.

Some meetings also saw clear instances of public attacks against civil society organizations. In the 28 January 2025 meeting, one CEC member expressed doubts about the organizational and financial capacity of an NGO (Kosova Democratic Institute – KDI) to accredit over 300 election observers, raising unfounded claims intended to delegitimize its role in monitoring the process. Earlier, in the 2 December 2024 meeting,

the same member characterized the reporting and public statements of this organization as “hybrid warfare” and “disinformation.” These attacks represent a troubling trend of attempting to limit the role of civil society in election observation and risk creating a climate of intimidation for organizations critical of the electoral administration.

These elections, as the first regular elections since the declaration of independence, were conducted based on a more stable calendar, providing the CEC with more time for planning and execution. However, despite this advantage, delays were recorded in several key processes, including the approval of municipal election commission compositions, the establishment of municipal counting centers, and the publication of polling stations abroad. The latter delay was influenced by a lack of coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which did not provide the necessary data on Kosovo's diplomatic missions in a timely manner. This contributed to a public perception of lack of transparency and undermined the integrity of out-of-country voting. Media reports indicated direct involvement of senior diplomatic officials—including Kosovo's ambassador to Croatia—in transporting ballots without formal authorization.

Legislation clearly stipulates that out-of-country ballots must be transported by a company with recognized expertise in supporting this process. However, due to delays in the administration of the process and the appeal procedure regarding the selection of the winning bidder, the CEC was compelled to issue a decision authorizing its Secretariat, in cooperation with the MFA, to form a joint team for the collection and transportation of ballots.

The CEC undertook several technical measures to increase transparency and control over the process, though these were accompanied by debate and public reactions. One of the main technical challenges of these elections was the issue of indelible ink. The procurement process for this material was delayed and faced quality issues, with delivery occurring only a week before the elections. Although the materials were replaced, there were reports on election day that

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voter markings could be easily erased, raising concerns about the effectiveness of this mechanism. Moreover, the use of such ink for voter marking was criticized by civil society organizations and the Agency for Information and Privacy, which considered it a violation of vote secrecy. On the other hand, the installation of cameras in polling stations was seen as a positive measure, although it was emphasized that vote secrecy must be fully guaranteed. Another problematic decision was the positioning of voting booths in a way that exposed voters to observation by commissioners. This decision was widely criticized by civil society organizations for violating vote secrecy and, following public pressure, the CEC withdrew and changed the booth arrangement.

Despite the aforementioned challenges and tensions, it is worth noting that the CEC undertook efforts to improve technical operations. Training for municipal staff and those involved in polling stations was conducted over a limited period, but for the first time included components specifically addressing the administration of out-of-country voting. With OSCE support, digitalized systems were used for data reporting and logistical process management, contributing to the standardization and efficiency of certain technical functions of the electoral administration.

In general, the electoral administration succeeded in implementing most operations within the planned deadlines, although there were considerable delays in several key processes. Political clashes within the CEC, lack of coordination with other institutions, and challenges in fair community representation remain factors that impacted the credibility and efficiency of this process.

#### **4.2. Work of the Municipal Election Commissions and the Polling Station Committees**

Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) are bodies responsible, under the electoral legislation, for implementing electoral activities within the territory of each of the 38 municipalities in the country. By legal definition, MECs are generally composed of seven members, although this number may increase if more political

parties qualify to be represented in the MEC. Members are appointed by the CEC based on nominations from political entities that passed the electoral threshold in the previous elections. Their mandate begins within 15 days after the elections are announced and ends 15 days after the certification of the results. Decisions within MECs are taken by a majority vote of the members present.

The primary responsibilities of MECs involve the administration of elections within their respective municipalities, with a particular focus on voter services and the technical preparation of Election Day. Among other tasks, MECs provide information to voters, nominate trainers for election staff, appoint members and chairs of the Polling Station Committees (PSCs), determine the locations of polling centers and polling stations, review and amend the final voter list—including the removal of deceased persons—receive sensitive and non-sensitive materials in their depots, and so forth.

MECs play a key role in voter services, logistical preparation, the nomination of trainers for commissioners, the designation of polling center locations, and the distribution of election materials. However, during these elections, several instances of poor coordination between the CEC's central level and MECs were identified, resulting in delays in data transmission and failure to meet deadlines for logistical preparations at polling stations. In some cases, MECs did not receive timely or clear instructions for technical procedures, or acted based on misinterpretations of CEC decisions.

The CEC faced significant challenges due to the boycott and resignations of Serbian representatives in the northern municipalities. To compensate for this absence, the CEC temporarily appointed officials from other municipalities—a decision that was operationally necessary, but essentially in conflict with legal provisions requiring fair representation and composition from within the relevant municipality.

Throughout the process, the CEC adopted several decisions concerning the number and distribution of polling centers and stations. In total, over 15,000 commissioners were appointed to manage the election process do-



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mestically, and over 150 for the polling stations at diplomatic missions abroad. In addition, more than 2,300 members were appointed to the vote counting teams in the 38 Municipal Counting Centres (MCCs).

These elections saw changes in the structure of the Polling Station Committees, including the addition of a commissioner dedicated to reporting statistical data and the replacement of the commissioner responsible for the ballot box—a role traditionally essential for preventing irregularities during ballot casting.

This structural change, justified as a measure to improve data collection, did not yield tangible results on the ground. On Election Day, no real-time or useful aggregate statistics on turnout were produced or published, beyond those released in previous electoral cycles, casting doubt on the effectiveness of the new role. Even more concerning was the absence of a dedicated ballot box commissioner, which was linked to a number of reported incidents, including unstamped or photocopied ballots ending up in the boxes.

On the other hand, in some municipalities, political parties nominated representatives from other communities, causing tensions over the allocation of positions in the Polling Station Committees. In several cases, non-majority community parties expressed dissatisfaction with their representation in the MECs. Their complaints to the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) were upheld, forcing the CEC to revise the composition of these commissions. This development highlighted the need for a more transparent and inclusive mechanism for allocating positions in the electoral administration.

Training for most commissioners began only eight days before Election Day, a timeframe considered insufficient to ensure the necessary preparedness for proper administration of the voting process—particularly in a context involving changes to the legal framework.

Although MECs and PSCs managed, in most cases, to perform the basic duties of Election Day, the lack of long-term preparation, issues with representation of non-majority communities, untested structural chang-

es at polling stations, and weak coordination with the CEC are all challenges that the managing bodies must analyze more thoroughly

### 4.3. Work in the Municipal Counting Centres

Municipal Counting Centres (MCCs) are a novelty in Kosovo's electoral process, fully operational for the first time during this year's parliamentary elections as part of a reform aimed at relocating the counting of preferential votes from the polling station to a centralized municipal facility. According to the Law on General Elections and the Electoral Regulation on MCCs, these centers serve to count the preferential votes for candidates, receive and verify electoral materials from polling stations, and transmit the data to the Central Counting and Results Centre (CRC). They are located in large venues such as gyms or sports halls and are administered by the MECs, with staff selected by the CEC and operating according to pre-approved operational schemes.

The development of this model aimed to prevent manipulations with preferential votes by polling station commissioners and to improve data accuracy. However, despite this intention, the practical implementation of MCCs revealed serious issues in organization, execution, and oversight—compromising the credibility of the process in many cases and unnecessarily prolonging the finalization of results.

The work within the MCCs was an ambitious attempt to enhance the integrity of the electoral process, but in practice it was met with poor preparation, systemic problems in training, weak logistical support, and inadequate supervision by MECs and the CEC. In many cases, MCCs became the weakest link in the electoral administration chain, resulting in prolonged procedures.

Monitoring of the MCCs revealed a range of issues, including a lack of standardized procedures for handling materials and serious shortcomings in the training of counting staff. In many instances, team members did not possess adequate knowledge for correctly reporting data on the relevant forms—especially when

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discrepancies occurred between ballots and voter signature lists. In the absence of clear instructions for managing such situations, the process was halted for long periods, causing confusion and delays.

Another critical challenge was the lack of technical infrastructure, particularly the unreliable internet connections, which in many MCCs prevented teams from transmitting data in real time to the central platform. In some cases, this led to ballot boxes remaining unprocessed for hours, forcing staff to return the next day to complete the process.

DiA's monitoring also noted repeated tensions between counting team members and observers, especially when observers requested access to supporting documentation or alleged discrepancies.

Moreover, the CEC's responses to reports of delays or slow progress were often improvised and lacked a clear contingency plan. Instead of taking immediate measures to increase capacities or provide technical interventions, in some cases the official justification for delays was "due to the cameras not being connected to the monitors," leaving the public with the impression that while the entire country was waiting for results, the process was being stalled for entirely secondary reasons.

One of the key goals of creating MCCs was to eliminate vote manipulation at the polling station by moving counting to a more controlled environment. However, in practice, this relocation alone proved insufficient to ensure full accuracy and credibility of the results. The case of Vushtrri municipality is illustrative in this regard: verification of results at the MCC revealed discrepancies in candidate results in 35 polling stations, while only in 15 out of the 96 polling stations were no differences found between the reported and recounted results. These findings demonstrate that the problem does not lie solely in the location of the counting, but in the capacity and integrity of the electoral administration executing the process. Despite the use of cameras, the presence of observers, and higher operational costs, this model failed to deliver a significant improvement in the accuracy and integrity of the process.

#### 4.4. Work in the Counting and Results Centre

The Counting and Results Centre (CRC) is a functional unit within the Central Election Commission (CEC), responsible for administering the final phase of the electoral process. It serves as the concluding link in the chain of verifying, counting, and tabulating final election results.

According to Electoral Regulation No. 14/2024, the CRC is responsible for receiving and reviewing all election materials from polling stations and Municipal Counting Centres (MCCs), for counting conditional ballots and out-of-country votes, addressing inconsistencies in results, and executing any recounts ordered by the CEC or other relevant institutions. The CRC also plays a crucial role in preparing the results for certification and in scanning the final voter list for future verification purposes.

After the close of Election Day, ballot boxes and electoral materials from polling stations and MCCs were delivered to the CRC for verification. The acceptance process included checking the result forms, comparing them to the number of voters signed in the voter lists, and verifying the consistency of numerical data. This process, while generally orderly, was at times slow and burdened by technical and organizational issues.

In addition to delays, problems with the organization of the physical space were observed, causing logistical bottlenecks and unnecessary obstruction in the movement of teams inside the centre. There were also instances of disputes and verbal altercations between professional staff engaged at the CRC and members of the CEC. These disagreements included open confrontations regarding the pace and methodology of the process, particularly concerning the treatment of invalid ballots. Interventions by certain CEC members—especially those affiliated with the ruling party—caused tensions that called into question the functional separation between political decision-making and the technical operations of the electoral administration.

During operations at the CRC, and with the involvement of the Prosecutor's Office, irregularities were identified. Specifically, a decision was made to recount 50 polling stations, 35 of which were from the municipality

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of Vushtrri and 15 others from various municipalities, where discrepancies were found between the number of voter signatures and the number of ballots in the boxes. In Vushtrri, particular irregularities were noted regarding preferential vote results for candidates. Upon reviewing the forms, it was discovered that in 35 polling stations in that municipality, the results for candidates from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) showed notable discrepancies or inconsistencies.

Although the recount process was necessary to ensure the integrity of the electoral results, it added further strain on the CRC and extended the timeframe for concluding the election process. CRC staff were intensely engaged in counting the additional ballot boxes while continuing to process other materials such as conditional and out-of-country ballots.

#### **4.5. Certification of political entities and their candidates**

The certification process for political entities and their candidates for the February 9, 2025 parliamentary elections was conducted over a 102-day period, from September 1 to December 11, 2024. During this time, 28 political entities submitted applications for certification, with a total of 1,280 candidates.

The CEC approved the applications of all political entities, except for the case of the Serbian List (Srpska Lista), which became a defining episode of these elections, affecting perceptions of the independence of the electoral administration. In its December 23, 2024 meeting, the CEC rejected the certification of the Serbian List, despite the Office for Registration of Political Parties having determined that the party met all the legal and regulatory criteria. The decision was taken through a political vote by CEC members—representatives of the ruling party voted against certification without providing any legally grounded justification or relevant documentation, while opposition party representatives abstained.



Based on the Electoral Regulation No. 14/2024, the CRC is responsible for receiving and checking all election materials from polling stations and Municipal Counting Centers (MCCs), for counting conditional votes and votes from abroad, for handling cases of discrepancies in results, as well as for carrying out any recount requested by the CEC itself or by decision of other relevant institutions. The CRC also has a key role in preparing the final results for certification and in scanning the final voter list for subsequent verifications.

The decision was appealed by the Serbian List to the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP), which annulled the CEC's decision as lacking legal basis. The ECAP's ruling was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court, reinforcing the view that the refusal was political rather than legal. This case highlighted a concerning trend of political considerations interfering with CEC decision-making.

A total of 28 political entities participated in the elections, including 20 political parties, 5 pre-election coalitions, 2 citizens' initiatives, and 1 independent candidate. Of these, 8 were Albanian-majority parties, 6 represented the Serbian community, 6 were from the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, 4 Bosniak, 3 Turkish, and 1 Gorani. Three major parliamentary parties

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(LVV, PDK, and LDK) ran independently, while AAK entered the elections in coalition with smaller parties and citizens' initiatives.

All parliamentary political entities complied with the 30% gender quota for candidate lists. However, the composition of the lists suggests that this requirement was met in a formalistic manner, with most parties placing women candidates at or near the minimum legal threshold. For example, Vetëvendosje (LVV) included 41 women in its candidate list (37%), followed by PDK with 38 women (34%), LDK with 37 (33%), and the AAK–Nisma coalition with 36 (32%).

While these figures hover near the minimum quota, the lack of substantive gender equality on the lists reflects the continuing limitations on women's political inclusion caused by internal party structures and decision-making processes. Nevertheless, the WOMENDual increase in women's representation may be viewed as a positive signal that political entities are beginning to recognize the importance of gender inclusion in building an inclusive democracy.

The candidate certification process was notably influenced by legal changes adopted in 2023, which lowered the legal eligibility criteria for candidacy. Under the new amendments, only individuals sentenced to more than one year of actual imprisonment are prohibited from running, thereby excluding from disqualification those convicted with suspended sentences, fines, or alternative sanctions—even in cases involving corruption or abuse of office.

As a result, the candidate lists included individuals under criminal investigation, on trial, or previously convicted but not sentenced to over one year of imprisonment. This legislative change represents a step backward in efforts to combat political corruption and cleanse candidate lists of individuals with criminal records—especially in a context where most corruption cases in Kosovo are punished with suspended or alternative sentences. The absence of a higher ethical standard for representation allows the system to formally legitimize candidates who, while legally admissible, may be unsuitable in terms of integrity.



All parliamentary political entities complied with the 30% gender quota for candidate lists. However, the composition of the lists suggests that this requirement was met in a formalistic manner, with most parties placing women candidates at or near the minimum legal threshold. For example, Vetëvendosje (LVV) included 41 women in its candidate list (37%), followed by PDK with 38 women (34%), LDK with 37 (33%), and the AAK–Nisma coalition with 36 (32%).

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#### 4.6. Certification of the Voter List and Voter Services

The voter list for the 9 February 2025 parliamentary elections was compiled by the Central Election Commission (CEC), in accordance with the applicable legal provisions and in cooperation with the institutions responsible for civil status data management. The primary data source for this process was the Central Civil Registry (CCR), administered by the Civil Registration Agency (CRA) within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

To verify and update the data on eligible voters, the CEC received three separate extracts from the Department of Civil Status (DCS) and the Department for Document Production (DDP). These data were subjected to an inter-institutional verification and comparison process, aimed at removing individuals who were not legally eligible to vote.

The final voter list included a total of 2,075,868 registered voters, representing an increase of 174,888 voters compared to the 2021 local elections. This increase included 125,852 newly eligible voters who had turned 18 years old between the two election cycles. Of the total, 1,970,944 voters were registered inside Kosovo, while 104,924 were registered to vote from abroad.

Although the CEC fulfilled its procedural obligations related to the compilation and publication of the voter list, the continuous “inflation” of the list compared to the actual population data remains one of the most serious challenges affecting public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process. This concern has also been consistently raised by international observation missions, including that of the European Union.

Nevertheless, the CEC undertook several steps to clean the voter list, in cooperation with relevant institutions. A total of 160 voters were removed due to loss of legal capacity, based on the list provided by the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC). Furthermore, 915 deceased individuals were removed following confirmation by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) and the Department of Pensions (DP). Additionally, a number of individuals over 100 years old, who did not appear in active civil documentation records, were excluded by a specific

decision of the CEC. These interventions were necessary to improve the accuracy of the list, though the total number of registered voters continues to significantly exceed the country's population.

As part of finalizing the list and ensuring voters' right to information, the CEC offered a Voter Services platform between 29 August and 26 December 2024. This service enabled citizens to verify their personal data on the voter list, apply to change their polling center within the same municipality, or request inclusion or correction if they were not listed. During this period, 17,219 applications to change polling centers were received, of which 16,503 were approved and 716 were rejected. Despite these efforts, there were reported instances of procedural ambiguity and incomplete communication with citizens, particularly in larger municipalities where administrative capacity proved insufficient to manage the volume of requests efficiently.

For the organization of the voting process, the CEC approved a total of

**903**  
polling centers



with

**2,533**  
regular polling stations.



In addition, 38 conditional polling centers with 56 polling stations were functional to accommodate special voting cases, as defined by applicable legislation.



Decan

NUMBER OF VOTERS



**40,976**

NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS



**14**

NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS



**50**



Gjakova

NUMBER OF VOTERS



**119,237**

NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS



**36**

NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS



**145**



Glogoc

NUMBER OF VOTERS



**56,703**

NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS



**31**

NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS



**72**



Gjilan

NUMBER OF VOTERS



**103,616**

NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS



**37**

NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS



**129**



Dragash

NUMBER OF VOTERS



**40,263**

NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS



**33**

NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS



**56**



Istog

NUMBER OF VOTERS



**50,276**

NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS



**21**

NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS



**60**



Kacanik

NUMBER OF VOTERS



**33,157**

NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS



























































































**21**

NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS











































**46**

 <b>Klina</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>50,706</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>21</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>62</b>
 <b>Kosovo Polje</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>47,406</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>16</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>58</b>
 <b>Kamenica</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>33,775</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>28</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>50</b>
 <b>South Mitrovica</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>81,482</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>32</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>105</b>
 <b>Leposavic</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>13,876</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>18</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>26</b>
 <b>Lipjan</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>64,341</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>33</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>84</b>
 <b>Novobrd</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>9,820</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>18</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>22</b>
 <b>Obiliq</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>25,883</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>14</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>33</b>
 <b>Rahovec</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>58,338</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>35</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>79</b>
 <b>Peja</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>115,679</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>24</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>132</b>
 <b>Podujeva</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>84,023</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>47</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>110</b>

 <b>Pristina</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>212,515</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>54</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>258</b>
 <b>Prizren</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>182,939</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>76</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>236</b>
 <b>Skenderaj</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>53,329</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>33</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>71</b>
 <b>Shtime</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>27,329</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>15</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>33</b>
 <b>Shterpca</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>12,864</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>9</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>17</b>
 <b>Suhareka</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>68,101</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>34</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>87</b>
 <b>Ferizaj</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>118,288</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>48</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>152</b>
 <b>Viti</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>49,054</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>30</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>63</b>
 <b>Vushtrri</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>73,713</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>32</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>96</b>
 <b>Zubin Potok</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>6,843</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>12</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>14</b>
 <b>Zvecan</b>	NUMBER OF VOTERS  <b>7,203</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS  <b>6</b>	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS  <b>11</b>



 <b>Malisheva</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>55,154</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>35</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>72</b>
 <b>Junik</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>5,292</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>1</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>7</b>
 <b>Mamusha</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>4,699</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>1</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>5</b>
 <b>Hani Elezit</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>8,641</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>4</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>12</b>
 <b>WOMENcanica</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>22,819</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>13</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>31</b>
 <b>Ranillug</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>5,069</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>7</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>10</b>
 <b>Partesh</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>4,882</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>3</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>7</b>
 <b>Kllokot</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>3,872</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>5</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>8</b>
 <b>North Mitrovica</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>18,781</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>6</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>24</b>

 <b>Total</b>	 NUMBER OF VOTERS <b>1,970,944</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS <b>903</b>	 NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS <b>2,533</b>
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#### 4.7. Out-of-Kosovo Voting

Due to legislative changes and the complex nature of the process, voting outside Kosovo was one of the most debated issues in these elections. The application period for registration as an out-of-country voter ran from 29 August to 26 December 2024. Applications could be submitted in two ways: via the CEC's electronic platform or by mailing the required documents, as set out in Regulation No. 17/2024.

After verifying the documentation and handling objections before the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel, the CEC compiled the final out-of-country voter list with 104,924 registered voters abroad. In accordance with Article 96, paraWOMENph 9 of the Law on General Elections, these voters were removed from the in-country voter list to avoid double voting.

During registration, out-of-country voters pre-selected their voting method, which included postal voting—either to Kosovo or to post boxes opened abroad—or in-person voting at diplomatic missions. According to the CEC, of the 104,924 diaspora voters, 20,416 (19.5 per cent) opted to vote in person at diplomatic missions, while 84,508 chose postal voting.

The CEC planned to open polling stations in 19 countries (a total of 43 polling stations in 16 embassies and 14 consulates) for in-person voting on 8 February 2025. However, due to the very low number of registered voters in some locations and logistical challenges, the CEC cancelled five planned diaspora polling stations, directing voters in those areas to vote by post.

The postal voting process was based on sending the ballots in separate envelopes either to Kosovo or to the post boxes opened by the CEC in several countries. Ballot envelopes had to be sent within the specified deadline, bearing a postmark dated within the allowed voting period. With the assistance of diplomatic missions, the CEC had also opened its own post boxes abroad to receive the ballots as a measure to facilitate and speed up their arrival.

During the registration period, the CEC received applications from 75 different countries. The geoWOMENph-

ical concentration of Kosovo's diaspora was confirmed once again, with Germany and Switzerland together accounting for over 70 per cent of applications, with 44,774 and 27,248 applicants respectively.

Of the total number registered, actual turnout was very high, about 80 per cent. According to CEC data, 15,352 diaspora citizens voted in person at diplomatic missions and 68,712 voted by post. This means that the vast majority of registered voters exercised their right to vote. Only about 20 per cent of those on the out-of-country voter list did not participate.

In total, the CEC received nearly 69 thousand envelopes with ballots from the diaspora. Of these, after assessment at the CRC, around 63 thousand envelopes were approved, while fewer than 5 thousand were rejected as invalid. The reasons for rejection were documented and mainly related to technical or procedural irregularities. For example, hundreds of envelopes were declared invalid because the respective voters had opted to vote in person at embassies. Cases were also found of multiple envelopes sent by the same voter, as well as envelopes without a postmark or with other formal issues, all of which were rejected.

Ballot consignments from the diaspora continued to be collected and confirmed for several days after 9 February. By 7 February 2025, the postal service had confirmed 50,226 envelopes received in the post boxes abroad, and meanwhile 40,859 of them had already arrived physically in Kosovo. This meant that thousands of out-of-country votes were still being transported to the counting centre during and after election day. As a result, the final count of postal votes and those cast abroad began late. Officially, counting of diaspora ballots started on 26 February 2025, more than two weeks after election day, after in-country votes (regular) had first been counted and voter lists scanned to eliminate possible duplicates.

A critical aspect of administering the diaspora vote this year was the transport of ballot packages to Kosovo. The CEC initially considered hiring a private logistics company to collect and deliver the postal ballots from the out-of-country post boxes to Kosovo, a practice

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previously used or suggested to speed up the process. However, this did not materialise, as the CEC failed to engage a private operator to retrieve the ballots from abroad. Consequently, by decision of 21 January 2025, the CEC authorised the Acting Director of the CEC Secretariat to form a special transport team. This team consisted of nine CEC officials and seven officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD), tasked with collecting the ballot envelopes from post boxes worldwide and bringing them safely to Kosovo. The CEC itself acknowledged that procurement and logistical challenges, including the distribution and retrieval operations for postal votes, caused major delays in election preparations.

The decision to involve MFAD directly in transporting the diaspora ballots sparked debate about the integrity of the process. Civil-society organisations and some opposition parties voiced concern that involving a government ministry in the handling of ballots could compromise election impartiality. MFAD is part of the executive and headed by a political minister; therefore, the presence of its staff created the perception of political interference in a process that should be managed by independent electoral bodies. The main criticism was that the CEC did not provide sufficient transparency on how the joint CEC-MFAD team was managed, specifically regarding the protocols for safeguarding the envelopes, who had access to them during transit, and how the chain of custody was documented until delivery to the CRC.

The 2025 elections were the first held after a comprehensive electoral-law reform. The new Law on General Elections (Law No. 08/L-228) and the CEC's new regulations (including Regulation 17/2024) introduced innovations such as voting in diplomatic missions, electronic diaspora registration, cameras in polling stations, and more. Regarding the out-of-country vote, most legal provisions were formally implemented. The CEC managed to register a record number of diaspora voters within legal deadlines, respecting verification procedures and the right to appeal. The separate out-of-country voter list was certified unanimously by CEC members.

Nevertheless, practical implementation revealed shortcomings or ambiguities in the new framework. Some technical decisions were taken late by the CEC because of the process's complexity and at times a lack of inter-institutional coordination. For example, the designation of diaspora polling centres was delayed because the CEC had difficulty obtaining timely information from MFAD on the capacities and possible locations for voting in each diplomatic mission.

As usual, in these elections too, the out-of-country voting operation and its results proved among the most sensitive and polarising issues. The main controversy was between LVV and LDK, which showed the most drastic swings between the two out-of-country voting methods. Vetëvendosje, which had convincingly won the emiWOMENnts' vote in embassies (roughly four out of every five ballots), secured only about half of the postal votes from the diaspora. Specifically, LVV obtained ~51.6 per cent of the total postal vote, a result that still placed it first but was far lower than its ~80 per cent performance at diplomatic-mission polling stations. By contrast, LDK came second in postal votes with 30.5 per cent, a sharp rise compared with the ~7 per cent it received from voting at diplomatic missions. LDK officials themselves acknowledged that their surprising postal result was a major shift but explained it as the product of their diaspora's mobilisation. In a public statement, LDK stressed that "its very positive result via post is the work of its activists' support from the diaspora," suggesting that LDK's structures and sympathisers abroad had worked intensively to secure postal votes.

Beyond the party level, discrepancies were also seen in preferential votes for certain candidates, particularly within LDK's list. One case that drew attention was that of candidate Hysen Çekaj (LDK), a relatively new name in politics and himself a member of the diaspora (son of well-known activist Sali Çekaj), who achieved extraordinary success in the diaspora postal vote, receiving about 12 thousand votes from abroad alone. Comparing Çekaj's out-of-country votes with those inside Kosovo shows that roughly half of his total votes came from the diaspora.

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Vetëvendosje, as the election winner but hit by its reduced share in postal votes, publicly raised the concern that these discrepancies were the result of organised manipulation. On 8 March 2025—about a month after the election—LVV filed complaints and stated publicly that “there were numerous manipulations and abuses by LDK members, where [postal] voting occurred in massively manipulated fashion, with the same ink and by the same hands.”<sup>2</sup> Conversely, LDK categorically denied these accusations and launched a political counter-attack. LDK officials argued that LVV was trying to discredit the diaspora vote simply because the result did not please it.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond public rhetoric, LVV took its fraud claims to the competent electoral bodies. On 15 March 2025, as soon as the CEC announced the final results, Vetëvendosje filed three complaints with the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP). In parallel with the electoral complaints, LVV also filed a criminal report regarding the alleged manipulation. The Basic Prosecution in Pristina confirmed that it had launched an investigation into the postal-vote issue after Vetëvendosje presented alleged evidence of wrongdoing. On 26 March, the prosecution announced that it had authorised the Kosovo Police to investigate the allegations and gather facts regarding the diaspora ballots. This shows that, even though the electoral process had officially concluded, the criminal aspect of the manipulation claims is still being examined. Nevertheless, in the absence of new evidence or any subsequent court decision, the election result remained as initially declared—with all diaspora votes counted and included in the final outcome.

Undoubtedly, the incident affected post-electoral developments and perceptions of the democratic process. Because of LVV’s complaints, the CEC had to postpone final certification of the elections for more than a month after 9 February. Until ECAP and the Supreme Court issued their decisions, the result remained on hold. This postponement, though in line with legal deadlines,

created temporary political uncertainty and prolonged negotiations over forming new institutions. The diaspora-votes episode further strained relations between LVV and LDK, two parties that had already been at odds before the elections. Mutual accusations of “vote theft” are among the most serious that parties can exchange in a democracy, and this left a mark on the political scene.

Without doubt, the incident influenced public perception of electoral integrity. A voting process that produces two such contradictory results within the same voter category tests citizens’ trust. In conclusion, the 9 February 2025 elections in Kosovo were certified as regular and reflective of voters’ will, but the out-of-country vote left a bitter aftertaste in terms of integrity. International reports assessed the elections positively overall but noted the debates over diaspora votes as an element that must be analysed and addressed in future to ensure higher standards.

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<sup>2</sup> “LVV files complaints with the ECAP, demands the annulment of more than 18 000 LDK postal votes and a repeat postal ballot” – at: <https://teleWOMENfi.com/lvv-dorezon-ankesa-ne-pzap-kerkon-anulimin-e-18-mije-votave-poste-te-ldk-se-dhe-rivotim/>

<sup>3</sup> He received 12 000 votes from the diaspora – Abdixhiku comes to the defence of the hero Sali Çekaj’s son” – at: <https://teleWOMENfi.com/mori-12-mije-vota-nga-diaspora-abdixhiku-del-ne-mbrojtje-djalit-te-deshmorit-hysen-cekaj/>

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## 5. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

For the regular elections of 9 February 2025, based on the Law on General Elections, the CEC set a 30-day timeframe for the organization of the electoral campaign, which officially began on 11 January and concluded on 8 February 2025. As in previous elections, the official campaign was preceded by an intensive pre-campaign period, which was mainly carried out on social media and traditional media outlets.

### Pre-campaign

The absence of legal regulation for the pre-campaign period created an unrestricted space for early electoral activities of political parties in Kosovo. This legal vacuum allowed political entities significant flexibility in defining their strategies and channels of communication with voters, making it practically impossible to distinguish between regular political activity and electoral campaigning. As a result, parties developed various tactics to benefit from this situation, whether through field activities, meetings with their structures, or digital campaigns.

One of the most prominent trends during this period was the domination of political figures—especially from the opposition—in televised debates, where they used media exposure to reinforce their narratives and challenge the acting government. This created a new dynamic in electoral communication, offering a platform for further political polarization.

Regarding party strategies, Vetëvendosje Movement focused its pre-campaign efforts mainly outside Kosovo, relying on the diaspora as an important source of electoral support. Through frequent meetings with diaspora communities in various European countries, the ruling party aimed to maintain and strengthen its electoral base while avoiding large public events within the country at this early stage. This approach reflects a deliberate strategy to preserve political momentum

and avoid direct exposure to criticism on the ground.

On the other hand, opposition parties employed different approaches to mobilize voters and shape their political discourse. The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) adopted an open, consultative model for drafting its political proWOMENm, organizing workshops throughout the country to involve the public in formulating the electoral platform. Meanwhile, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) used a more traditional strategy of civic engagement through direct meetings and door-to-door campaigning, aiming to build closer connections with the electorate. A similar model was followed by the AAK-NISMA coalition, with a particular focus on reinforcing its political message for more inclusive and pragmatic governance.

Although political communication during this period was generally moderate, moments of deep polarization between the ruling party and the opposition were observed. Harsh rhetoric was particularly present when opposition parties used this phase to denounce the government's failures, highlighting the executive's challenges in relation to international allies, the institutional crisis, and shortcomings in key governance sectors. Conversely, Vetëvendosje maintained a consistent approach, relying on its narrative of "cleansing" the political scene from corruption and the need for continued reforms. This clash between two opposing political visions further deepened the divide in public discourse, making it more difficult to foster a debate based on well-argued and measurable proposals.

Another important element of this period was the government's intervention through socially impactful financial measures, which raised concerns about the possible use of public resources for electoral purposes. Decisions such as increasing pensions for various categories, raising the minimum wage, and distributing financial aid to different segments of the popula-

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tion—though seemingly just social measures—sparked debate about their influence on the elections and the political motives that may lie behind them.

The most controversial of these measures remains the government's decision to distribute €100 to around 700,000 citizens as end-of-year holiday assistance, a move interpreted by political actors as an attempt to influence the electorate on the eve of elections. Additionally, the involvement of Prime Minister Kurti in the ceremony of distributing "work cards" for newly hired employees at KEK, as well as the promotion of government projects during this period, created the perception of a campaign supported by state resources—a practice that runs counter to international standards for equal electoral competition.

At the local level, instances were observed where municipal projects were used for electoral promotion, including ribbon-cutting events and inaugurations of public investments just before the elections—a tactic also employed by previous administrations. These practices raise concerns about the integrity of the electoral race and the possibility of indirect government influence on voters through financial and economic benefits.

Overall, the pre-campaign period in Kosovo continues to be an unregulated and indistinct phase from the official campaign, creating an uneven playing field for political competition. The use of state resources for electoral gains, the lack of legal regulation for this period, and the polarization of political discourse remain fundamental issues that need to be addressed to ensure a fairer and more transparent electoral process.

### Official campaign

The electoral campaign for the 9 February 2025 parliamentary elections was the first to span the full legal duration of 30 days, resulting in a higher intensity of activities and increased engagement by political entities both on the ground and in digital spaces.

During this period, through more than 40 long-term observers, Democracy in Action (DiA) monitored a

campaign that, despite taking place in a generally calm environment, was marked by an extremely harsh political discourse. DiA's monitoring recorded around 800 public events organized by political parties across all municipalities of Kosovo, including Serb-majority areas, where for the first time six Serb parties competed—signifying greater diversification of competition within this community.

Although the format of campaign activities shifted considerably, the focus on electoral promises was largely seen as a continuation of previous trends and a recycling of earlier messages. Public rallies remained the preferred method of campaigning by political entities, but door-to-door visits were also widely used. A positive development was the increased compliance by political subjects with the obligation to notify electoral activities to relevant institutions: 96% of rallies were reported in advance, whereas only 4% of campaign events were not submitted to the respective MECs—an improvement compared to previous elections.

One of the most prominent features of this campaign was the escalation of rhetoric and use of aggressive language by political parties and their candidates. The overall campaign spirit primarily reflected rivalries among political representatives rather than a focus on well-articulated platforms, which were published only days before the campaign's conclusion, while Lëvizja Vetëvendosje did not publish a written platform at all. Hate speech—mostly political—was observed in approximately 17% of monitored campaign events, including both in-person gatherings and digital platforms, where there was a notable rise in insults and hostile language. This hostile discourse resulted in a record number of fines issued by the ECAP, amounting to over €600,000.

For the first time, ECAP also began imposing sanctions for alleged violations committed by supporters of political parties due to their use of language, whether at field events or on social media. Additionally, disinformation and the spread of manipulative content were present—especially online—shaping public perception of candidates and political platforms.

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Beyond the intensified rhetoric and campaign tempo, a number of incidents raised concerns regarding adherence to democratic standards. Key incidents included the throwing of hard and pyrotechnic objects at a rally in Skenderaj,<sup>4</sup> the burning of promotional materials of candidates, and a series of incidents in Serb-majority municipalities such as the disruption of campaign events in WOMENÇanica, a Molotov cocktail thrown at a CEC vehicle<sup>5</sup> and several other events in northern Kosovo. These incidents not only heightened tensions on the ground but also impacted perceptions about freedom of assembly during the campaign period.

On the other hand, a positive aspect of this campaign was the greater attention paid by political entities to policy-related issues, reflecting a more structured effort to address topics of public interest. Despite instances of hate speech and polarizing discourse, the overall political debate demonstrated a higher level of engagement with specific issues such as education, economy, social welfare, security, and defense. A defining feature of the campaign was the clear distinction between the priorities of the ruling party and those of the opposition. While the ruling party focused its narrative on sovereignty and territorial integrity—particularly with regard to the north—the opposition parties concentrated more on economic issues and education, offering alternatives for development and recovery. This diversity in political priorities reflected different approaches to the country's challenges, although deeper analysis and concrete feasibility of the proposals often remained lacking.

The media landscape during the campaign was polarized, marked by two main developments: the ruling party maintained a consistently confrontational stance toward journalists, while certain media outlets were perceived as biased in their reporting. The Prime Minister and senior officials from the ruling party used aggressive rhetoric toward the media, accusing them of manipulation and negatively influencing public opinion. In some cases, journalists were prevented from reporting on the ground, while Vetëvendosje's boycott of sev-

eral media outlets significantly reduced transparency and created inequality in citizens' access to balanced electoral information—affecting the overall quality of public debate. Media were present in 39% of monitored campaign events.

As in past elections, the lack of a genuine culture of political competition resulted in an absence of debates and confrontations between candidates from different parties, which may have limited voters' ability to make informed choices based on clearly articulated platforms. Nevertheless, there was an increase in civic motivation and enthusiasm to participate in campaign events.

This year's campaign also witnessed significant mobilization on social media, with a considerable rise in the number of sponsored posts and digital advertising expenditures by parties and candidates. Despite the heightened intensity of the online campaign, transparency regarding the financing of these activities remains a concern, as monitoring revealed challenges in identifying funding sources and in oversight by relevant institutions.

The use of public resources—financial or human—particularly by ruling political parties at both central and local levels, continued to accompany campaign activities, although not to the same extent as in previous elections. This phenomenon was identified in 6% of campaign events.

Another important issue during this campaign was the inclusion of women and marginalized groups in the process. Despite increased political rhetoric on gender equality, the participation of women in campaign events remained low—both in terms of speaking roles at rallies and in televised debates. Women spoke at only 27% of monitored events and participated in just 14% of them. Furthermore, female candidates faced a high number of direct attacks in online spaces—a trend that highlights ongoing challenges in ensuring an equal environment for all participants in the electoral process.

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4 "Kurti canvasses for votes in Drenica amid the throwing of pyrotechnic devices" – at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/tensi-one-prane-tubimit-te-kurtit-ne-skenderaj-intervenon-policia>

5 "Car of a CEC member attacked with a molotov cocktail in Ranillug, prosecutor gives details" – at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/vetura-e-nje-anetareje-te-kqz-se-sulmohet-me-koktej-mollotovi-ne-ranillug-prokurori-jep-detaje/>

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Despite the fact that over 200,000 people with disabilities live in Kosovo, their participation in campaign events remained extremely limited. During this election campaign, there was not a single instance where a person with a disability addressed the electorate. The lack of adequate infrastructure for accessibility further hindered their participation, with 17% of campaign events failing to ensure proper access for this group.

### Political Party Campaign Expenditures

Throughout the 30-day electoral campaign, Democracy in Action (DiA) monitored and analyzed the expenditures of political parties and their candidates on social media. The data collected indicate a significant increase in the number of sponsored posts and the total amount spent, reflecting a sharp focus on digital campaigning strategies.

In total, around 8,000 sponsored posts were identified from political parties and their candidates, with overall spending exceeding €200,000. This notable increase in digital investments highlights that social networks are becoming the primary tool of electoral communication, largely replacing traditional forms of promotion.

Data analysis shows that the last week of the campaign saw a massive spike in sponsorships—suggesting a last-minute effort by parties and candidates to amplify their electoral messages.

At the top of the list of highest-spending candidates on Facebook and InstaWOMENm was LDK's candidate for Prime Minister, Lumir Abdixhiku, who spent over €18,000 on 153 sponsored posts. He was followed by PDK's candidate, Bedri Hamza, with over €17,000 spent across around 300 posts. Interestingly, third place in campaign spending was held by a political entity from the Roma community—Opre Roma Kosova—with a total of €16,000. Vetëvendosje, the ruling party, sponsored the highest number of posts—around 900—but with a comparatively lower amount of €14,000.

The profiles of Memli Krasniqi (€10,000), Ramush Haradinaj (nearly €9,000), LDK's official profile (around €8,000),

LDK candidate Krenar Xhaferi (€5,600), AAK candidate Egzon Kelmendi (around €4,000), and PDK candidate Aurora Berisha (€3,400) complete the list of the top ten spenders on social media over the past 30 days.

Despite the high level of spending, transparency regarding the financing of these activities remains questionable. DiA's monitoring revealed challenges in tracking funding sources and controlling expenditures by relevant institutions, raising concerns about undeclared funding or the use of unidentified sources.

Overall, the 2025 election campaign proceeded without major incidents that could have affected the general course of the process, but it raised serious concerns about the quality of political discourse and compliance with electoral ethics.



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## 6. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The representation and inclusion of women in the 9 February 2025 parliamentary elections continued to be limited and fell short of the objectives for gender equality in political representation. Despite provisions in the Law on General Elections guaranteeing a minimum quota of 30% for women on candidate lists, the vast majority of political parties merely complied with this legal obligation without translating it into a genuine commitment to real equality in decision-making.

Out of 1,280 candidates certified by the Central Election Commission (CEC), only 441 were women—representing 34%—which shows that gender representation on electoral lists remains unequal and more dependent on the legal quota than on the political will of the parties. In this regard, only Vetëvendosje Movement (VV) significantly exceeded the legal threshold, including 37% women in its list, followed by the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), each with 35%, while the AAK-NISMA coalition reached only 33%.

While the Constitutional Court, ahead of the elections, confirmed that Article 28 of the Law on Elections is in accordance with the Constitution and does not infringe upon the electoral rights of candidates, the Law on Gender Equality—which requires equal 50/50 representation at all levels of decision-making—remained only partially implemented in electoral practice.

### Representation of Women in Electoral Institutions

Out of 13,193 officials engaged as members of Polling Station Councils in the 9 February 2025 elections, only 4,217 were women. Within the Municipal Election Commissions (MECs), out of a total of 216 officials, only 51 were women. The political entity with the highest inclusion of women in MECs was Vetëvendosje Movement









































(VV) (43.24%), followed by LDK with 8 women, GI-SPO with 7, and AAK and Serb List with 6 women each. In the Municipal Election Commissions, women made up only 23% of members and only 16% of chairpersons.






























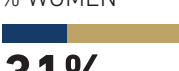




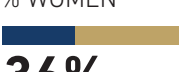















Even at the highest institutional levels, gender representation remained unequal. Only two out of the 11 members of the CEC are women. Women made up around 28% of polling station commission members—a percentage still low for a system that aims for inclusivity.

























### Election Results and Representation in the Assembly

The results published by the CEC indicate that in the new composition of the Kosovo Assembly, there will be 45 women MPs, of whom 39 were elected without the need to apply the gender quota. This represents a significant improvement compared to the 2021 elections, when only 32 women were elected without the quota. Meanwhile, the previous legislature included 40 women, two of whom were leaders of parliamentary parties, and seven parliamentary committees were chaired by women.

This progress is meaningful, but not sufficient to achieve real equality in representation. Moreover, the fact that the majority of women were elected from the ranks of VV highlights that the increase in representation was not the result of an equal effort among all parties, but rather a reflection of the electoral dynamics of a single party.



















































<b>VETËVENDOSJE Movement</b>		<b>69</b>		<b>41</b>	 	<b>110</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF KOSOVO – PDK</b>		<b>72</b>		<b>38</b>	 	<b>110</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE OF KOSOVO – LDK</b>		<b>72</b>		<b>38</b>	 	<b>110</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>KOSOVA DEMOKRATİK TÜRK PARTİSİ</b>		<b>18</b>		<b>7</b>	 	<b>25</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC UNION – SDU</b>		<b>25</b>		<b>15</b>	 	<b>40</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>NEW DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVE OF KOSOVO – IRDK</b>		<b>26</b>		<b>15</b>	 	<b>41</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Vakat Coalition</b>		<b>32</b>		<b>16</b>	 	<b>48</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>ASHKALI PARTY FOR INTEGRATION</b>		<b>24</b>		<b>11</b>	 	<b>35</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>NOVA DEMOKRATSKA STRANKA</b>		<b>27</b>		<b>19</b>	 	<b>46</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>United Gorani Party</b>		<b>18</b>		<b>11</b>	 	<b>29</b>	<b>38%</b>


























<b>Za Slobodu Pravdu i Opstana (SPO)</b>	 <b>8</b>	 <b>4</b>	  <b>12</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>33%</b>
<b>AAK – ALLIANCE FOR THE FUTURE OF KOSOVO / NISMA Coalition</b>	 <b>74</b>	 <b>36</b>	  <b>110</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>33%</b>
<b>Fjala</b>	 <b>14</b>	 <b>8</b>	  <b>22</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>36%</b>
<b>UNITED ROMA PARTY OF KOSOVO</b>	 <b>38</b>	 <b>18</b>	  <b>56</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>32%</b>
<b>EGYPTIAN LIBERAL PARTY – PLE</b>	 <b>41</b>	 <b>20</b>	  <b>61</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>33%</b>
<b>Srpska demokratija (SD)</b>	 <b>9</b>	 <b>4</b>	  <b>13</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>31%</b>
<b>Yenilikçi Türk Hareket Partisi (YTHP)</b>	 <b>16</b>	 <b>9</b>	  <b>25</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>36%</b>
<b>Kosova Adalet Türk Partisi (KATP)</b>	 <b>1</b>	 <b>0</b>	  <b>1</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>0%</b>
<b>Family Coalition</b>	 <b>49</b>	 <b>22</b>	  <b>71</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>31%</b>
<b>Albanian Democratic National Balli Party</b>	 <b>64</b>	 <b>31</b>	  <b>95</b>	<b>% WOMEN</b>  <b>33%</b>

<b>Srpski Narodni Pokret</b>		MEN <b>7</b>		WOMEN <b>5</b>		TOTAL <b>12</b>	% WOMEN <b>42%</b>
<b>Party of Kosovo Serbs</b>		MEN <b>5</b>		WOMEN <b>4</b>		TOTAL <b>9</b>	% WOMEN <b>44%</b>
<b>PDAK-LPB</b>		MEN <b>65</b>		WOMEN <b>35</b>		TOTAL <b>100</b>	% WOMEN <b>35%</b>
<b>Niša Bošnjačka Koalicija</b>		MEN <b>19</b>		WOMEN <b>9</b>		TOTAL <b>28</b>	% WOMEN <b>32%</b>
<b>Inicijative Narodna Pravda</b>		MEN <b>6</b>		WOMEN <b>4</b>		TOTAL <b>10</b>	% WOMEN <b>40%</b>
<b>Opre Roma Kosova</b>		MEN <b>7</b>		WOMEN <b>5</b>		TOTAL <b>12</b>	% WOMEN <b>42%</b>
<b>Fatmir Bytyqi</b>		MEN <b>1</b>		WOMEN <b>0</b>		TOTAL <b>1</b>	% WOMEN <b>0%</b>
<b>Srpska Lista</b>		MEN <b>32</b>		WOMEN <b>16</b>		TOTAL <b>48</b>	% WOMEN <b>33%</b>

<b>TOTAL</b>		MEN <b>839</b>		WOMEN <b>441</b>		TOTAL <b>1280</b>	% WOMEN <b>33%</b>
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**Table 3:** Gender composition of the certified candidate lists of political entities

<b>VETËVENDOSJE Movement</b>		MEN <b>21</b>		WOMEN <b>16</b>	TOTALI   <b>37</b>	% WOMEN  <b>43.24%</b>
<b>DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF KOSOVO – PDK</b>		MEN <b>33</b>		WOMEN <b>4</b>	TOTALI   <b>37</b>	% WOMEN  <b>8.75%</b>
<b>DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE OF KOSOVO – LDK</b>		MEN <b>29</b>		WOMEN <b>8</b>	TOTALI   <b>35</b>	% WOMEN  <b>21.62%</b>
<b>AAK – ALLIANCE FOR THE FUTURE OF KOSOVO / NISMA Coalition</b>		MEN <b>29</b>		WOMEN <b>6</b>	TOTALI   <b>35</b>	% WOMEN  <b>17.65%</b>
<b>SRPSKA LISTA</b>		MEN <b>15</b>		WOMEN <b>6</b>	TOTALI   <b>21</b>	% WOMEN  <b>28.57%</b>
<b>IRDK</b>		MEN <b>9</b>		WOMEN <b>2</b>	TOTALI   <b>11</b>	% WOMEN  <b>25.00%</b>
<b>DSB Vakut</b>		MEN <b>4</b>		WOMEN <b>1</b>	TOTALI   <b>5</b>	% WOMEN  <b>20.00%</b>
<b>GI-SP0</b>		MEN <b>9</b>		WOMEN <b>7</b>	TOTALI   <b>16</b>	% WOMEN  <b>46.67%</b>
<b>KDTP</b>		MEN <b>5</b>		WOMEN <b>1</b>	TOTALI   <b>6</b>	% WOMEN  <b>16.67%</b>
<b>PAI</b>		MEN <b>6</b>		WOMEN <b>0</b>	TOTALI   <b>6</b>	% WOMEN  <b>0.00%</b>

<b>SDU</b>	▶	MEN  <b>2</b>	WOMEN  <b>0</b>	TOTALI   <b>2</b>	% WOMEN  <b>0.00%</b>
<b>Romni iniciativa -RI</b>	▶	MEN  <b>1</b>	WOMEN  <b>0</b>	TOTALI   <b>1</b>	% WOMEN  <b>0.00%</b>
<b>JGP</b>	▶	MEN  <b>1</b>	WOMEN  <b>0</b>	TOTALI   <b>1</b>	% WOMEN  <b>0.00%</b>
<b>NDS</b>	▶	MEN  <b>1</b>	WOMEN  <b>0</b>	TOTALI   <b>1</b>	% WOMEN  <b>0.00%</b>
<b>LPRK</b>	▶	MEN  <b>0</b>	WOMEN  <b>0</b>	TOTALI   <b>0</b>	% WOMEN  <b>0.00%</b>

**Table 4:** Gender composition of the Municipal Election Commissions

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## 7. ELECTION OBSERVATION

Election observation plays an irreplaceable role in enhancing transparency and credibility of elections in Kosovo. The legal framework for elections guarantees the right of observation to both domestic and international actors, including citizens, political parties, civil society organizations, and international missions. The law also outlines the rights and responsibilities of observers, including the principle of impartiality and neutrality. However, a concern raised also by the EU observation mission relates to the limited accreditation period for observers—only one month before election day—which does not align with the most critical phases of the electoral process, including the publication and challenge period of the preliminary voters' list.

The 9 February 2025 parliamentary elections were monitored by a significant number of observers, demonstrating a high level of interest in the integrity of the electoral process. In total, the Central Election Commission (CEC) accredited over 20,000 different observers, including 22 domestic organizations and 11 international ones.

Political parties made up the vast majority of this number, with a total of 18,432 accredited observers.<sup>6</sup> Vetëvendosje (LVV) topped the list with 4,356 observers, followed by the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) with 4,034, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) with 3,962, and the AAK-NISMA coalition with 3,571.

The Serb List, despite limited participation and delayed certification, managed to deploy 290 observers. This massive mobilization reflects the effort of political entities to safeguard the integrity of the vote at each polling station and to monitor the competition in real time.

Meanwhile, international missions contributed substantially to the monitoring of the process. The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) was the largest international presence, with a total of 163 long-term and short-term observers deployed across the entire territory. In addition, 11 international organizations were accredited, along with ten resident diplomatic missions and six delegations from foreign electoral administrations. Among the most prominent contributing institutions were the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (54 observers), OSCE, NDI (35 observers), as well as the embassies of the United States (24), the United Kingdom (30), and the European Union (19).

### Role of Civil Society Organizations

Domestic civil society organizations played a key role in ensuring the transparency of the electoral process. In total, the CEC accredited 22 domestic organizations with a total of 1,193 observers.<sup>7</sup> The Ombudsperson

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6 1. Twenty-one political entities registered observers with the Central Election Commission. The VETËVENDOSJE! Movement engaged 4,356 observers; the Democratic Party of Kosovo registered 4,034; and the Democratic League of Kosovo accredited 3,962 observers. The Kosova Demokratik Türk Partisi registered 257 observers; the Social Democratic Union (SDU) had 102; and the New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (IRDK) engaged 158 observers. Srpska Lista registered 290 observers. The Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), together with NISMA – the Social Democratic Initiative, the Conservatives, and the Intellectuals – accredited 3,571 observers. Opre Roma Kosova had 21 observers; the Vakati Coalition registered 700; the Serbian People's Movement had 88; and Za Slobodu, Pravdu i Opstanak engaged 96 observers. The Innovative Turkish Movement Party registered 51 observers; the Coalition for Family had 253; the Citizens' Initiative "Narodna Pravda" 26; and PDAK-LPB registered 74 observers. Our Bosniak Coalition – composed of Our Initiative and the Bosniak Party – engaged 28 observers. The Party of Kosovo Serbs registered 11 observers; the New Democratic Party 260; the Liberal Egyptian Party (PLE) 36; and the Unique Gorani Party registered 58 observers.

7 1. Kosova Democratic Institute (KDI) participated with 306 observers; the FOL Movement with 6 observers; and the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) with 48 observers. The AVONET NGO Network engaged 4 observers; the Centre for Policies and Advocacy (QPA) had 140; and Democracy Plus participated with 11 observers. The Orfeu Cultural Centre was present with 154 observers; Germin with 16; and Democracy for Development (D4D) with 9 observers. Vision Eye engaged 124 observers; Youth for Development and Cooperation had 14; and INTERNWËS KOSOVA registered 21 observers. PIPOS took part with 81 observers; the Youth Association for Human Rights with 2; and the Kosovo Center for International Cooperation with 56 observers. The Citizens' Association "RESTART" had 24 observers; Primo la Tolleranza 17; and the Centre for Social Inclusion in Gracanica 27. The Center for Cooperation and Networking of Organizations participated with 13 observers; the Center for Peace and Tolerance in Pristina with 36;

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Institution was also part of this number, representing an institutional approach to the protection of voters' rights on election day.

The largest citizen observation network was the "Democracy in Action" (DiA) coalition, which deployed a total of 730 observers on election day and distributed long-term observers in all municipalities of Kosovo to monitor the pre-election environment, the campaign, electoral expenditures, use of public resources, and hate speech. DiA published regular public reports throughout the campaign and provided detailed analysis on the integrity of the elections. On election day, the network also conducted a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) in a sample of 500 polling stations, further enhancing the credibility of the data.

The broad participation of observers—whether from political parties, civil society organizations, or international missions—contributed to strengthening the transparency and accountability of the electoral process. However, the limitations imposed by the CEC on the accreditation period—restricted only to the final month—curtailed the potential of some actors to effectively monitor the entire electoral cycle. This issue was highlighted as a recommendation by the EU Election Observation Mission, which proposed aligning the accreditation deadlines with key phases of the process, including the public scrutiny of the voters' list.



Political parties made up the vast majority of this number, with a total of 18,432 accredited observers. Vetëvendosje (LVV) topped the list with 4,356 observers, followed by the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) with 4,034, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) with 3,962, and the AAK-NISMA coalition with 3,571. The Serb List, despite limited participation and delayed certification, managed to deploy 290 observers. This massive mobilization reflects the effort of political entities to safeguard the integrity of the vote at each polling station and to monitor the competition in real time.

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and the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture with 17 observers.



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## 8. ELECTION DAY

Democracy in Action monitored the conduct of the Election Day process through 500 short-term observers deployed in 500 polling stations out of a total of 2,589, based on a representative sample. The monitoring and reporting on the progress of the voting process and the preliminary counting of political party results was conducted using the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) methodology.

The voting process was generally conducted in a calm and democratic atmosphere, with a relatively high turnout of citizens. No serious incidents were reported that could have undermined the integrity of the elections; however, a number of irregularities—mainly procedural in nature—were identified, often stemming from the lack of preparedness of the commissioners.

Polling stations opened on time in most cases, with the exception of 9% that opened 15–30 minutes late due to reasons such as absence of commissioners (13 cases), missing voting booths (6 cases), missing indelible ink (2 cases), or candidate brochures (1 case). In 73% of polling stations, women commissioners were present, which indicates a continued insufficient gender representation in the election administration.

Voting access for persons with physical disabilities remained limited due to infrastructural problems at several voting centers. While 80% of Voting Centers provided adequate access for persons with physical disabilities, 20% were reported to have physically inaccessible entrances. Although in the vast majority of centers, voting was organized on the ground floor to avoid difficulties for voters with physical disabilities in accessing upper floors, some cases were reported where voting took place on the upper floors of school buildings.

Within the 100-meter perimeter of some Voting Centers, campaign posters and other political campaign

materials were observed in 3% of cases, in violation of election rules. On the other hand, the presence of police outside voting center premises, in line with legal provisions, was ensured in all cases.

Although the electoral process was organized with substantial changes, informative posters were not placed in all Voting Centers by the CEC, with 15% of centers lacking any information about the voting process or the recent changes.

Additionally, there was no announcement regarding the acceptance of expired documents, a decision made by the CEC only one day before the elections. In 12% of polling stations, isolated cases (between 1 and 4) of voting with invalid documents were allowed.

Regarding the guarantee of vote secrecy, observers reported that the arrangement of polling stations was in line with the rules set by the CEC to ensure proper conduct of the voting process. Exceptions were noted in 2% of polling stations, where voting booths were mispositioned. Following DiA's public announcement of these cases, the booths were rearranged according to standards to guarantee vote secrecy. As this voting process also introduced for the first time the installation and operation of surveillance cameras in each polling station, there were no reports of cameras being placed in a way that would compromise the secrecy of the vote.

Nevertheless, in some cases, vote secrecy was compromised by the voters themselves. Observers reported isolated cases where more than one voter stood behind the voting booth at the same time—in 18% of polling stations. Isolated cases of ballot photography were also documented in 6% of polling stations.

Changes to polling stations for voters—mainly due to the addition or removal of centers and efforts to allow voters to cast their ballots closer to their place of

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residence—as well as new provisions for conditional voting (allowed in only one conditional voting center per municipality), led to confusion and difficulties for some voters in locating their designated polling station. In 52% of polling stations, voters experienced difficulties finding the correct location, with up to 100 such cases reported in a single polling station. Throughout the 12 hours of voting, up to 10 such cases were observed in 52% of polling stations, up to 50 cases in 19% of polling stations, and up to 100 cases in 3% of polling stations. In practice, the CEC's online platform for finding or changing the polling station did not yield the expected results, primarily due to the lack of a systematic information campaign on TV and especially on social media platforms.

The CEC had decided to implement indelible ink for the first time to mark voters' fingers. However, during Election Day, multiple reports indicated concerns from voters regarding the quality of the ink, which in some cases was easily wiped off.

To prevent the misuse of assisted voting rights, the CEC had tightened legal provisions by allowing assisted voting only for persons who could prove their disability with appropriate documentation. Throughout the day, 6% of all voters cast their ballots with the assistance of another person. Two-thirds of assisted voters were reported to be women. Moreover, in 35% of polling stations, isolated cases were observed where even young voters requested to vote with assistance.

DiA observers reported that, generally, cases of assisted voting were recorded in the Voting Book and therefore considered regular. However, there were also cases where assisted voting was not recorded—10% of polling stations reported such omissions, mainly involving up to 10 cases per station.

Throughout the day, eligible citizens showed high interest in participating in the elections, with the highest turnout noted in the early afternoon hours. By 12:00 PM, around 14.5% of registered voters had cast their ballots (with a margin of error of  $\pm 0.37$ ), from a total of 1,970,944 eligible voters. In Serb-majority municipalities, the turnout in the same time frame was over 24%—

nearly twice the national average. By 5:00 PM, the voter turnout rose to 38.9% (margin of error  $\pm 0.75$ ), and by the end of the voting process, the turnout reached 44.1% (margin of error  $\pm 0.84$ ). These figures do not include voters who voted conditionally or from abroad.

At the close of a peaceful voting process, DiA observers reported that no serious incidents occurred during the day that could have compromised the integrity of the elections. Observers also encountered no difficulties in obtaining information from polling station chairpersons. It was reported that 93% of polling stations closed on time, and 7% before or after 7:00 PM. No cases were reported of voters being denied the right to vote while waiting in line.

The counting of votes for political parties was carried out according to official protocols, with isolated cases where commissioners attempted to count candidate votes as well—this was reported in 2% of polling stations. No cases of commissioner objection to the results were reported.

Through the application of the PVT methodology for vote counting, tabulation, and verification, DiA published preliminary results for the main political parties at 10:00 PM via a press conference, filling a significant information gap left by the CEC, which failed to publish preliminary results after polls closed.

The technical problems and delays by the CEC in clarifying the situation for the public immediately after these issues emerged not only created confusion but also diminished public confidence in the transparency of the process. This situation negatively affected the perception of the electoral administration.

Even on the following day, the CEC provided no information on the start or progress of the counting process in the Municipal Counting Centers, leaving a major gap in institutional communication—despite the fact that these procedures were being applied for the first time following amendments to the General Elections Law.

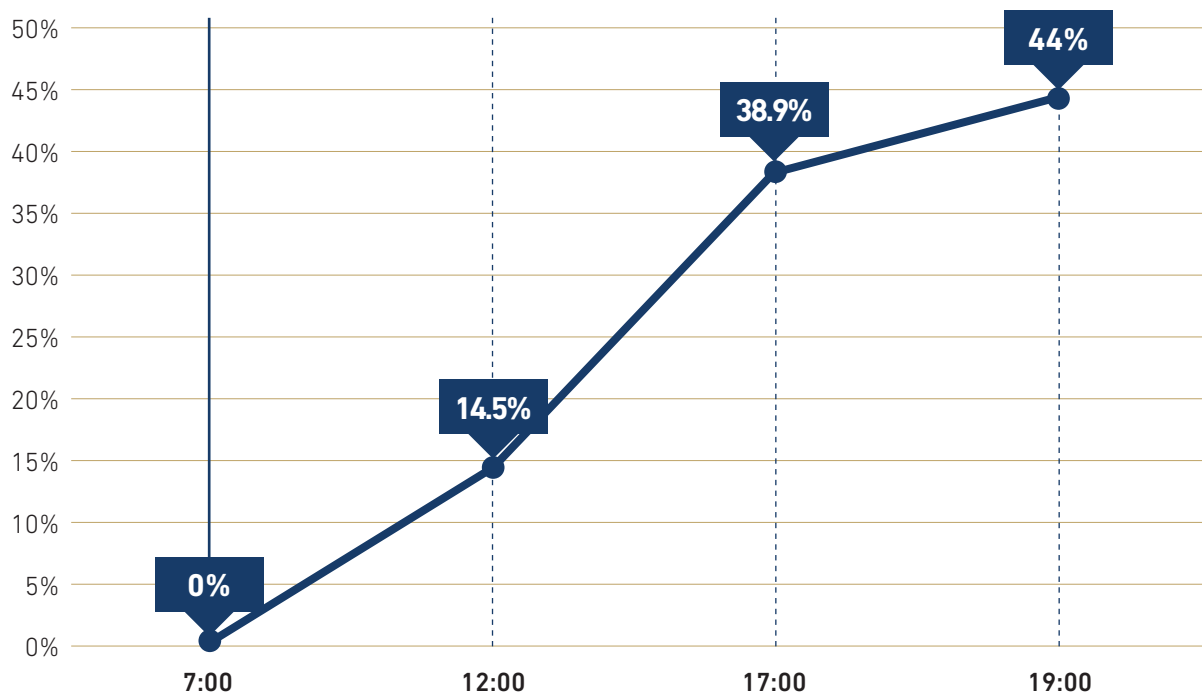
## PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2025

### VOTING



THE NUMBER OF CITIZENS  
WITH THE RIGHT TO VOTE  
IN KOSOVO IS

**1,970,944**



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## 9. ELECTION RESULTS

It took the Central Election Commission (CEC) a full 46 days from Election Day on 9 February until the final certification of results on 27 March 2025. These delays exceed normal expectations for an efficient electoral process and, as such, risk diminishing public trust in the institutions' capacity to manage regular elections. The reasons behind this delay were numerous and stemmed from technical malfunctions, serious institutional shortcomings in process management, lack of adequate training for electoral staff, and to some extent, political tensions. These delays—combined with the lack of clarity that accompanied the tabulation and publication phase—gave the process a character that was not only prolonged, but also contentious.

The process was marked by a failure—officially deemed technical, although no convincing proof was ever provided—to launch the CEC's website **for publishing preliminary results on election night. This failure prevented the release of initial data and consequently fueled public uncertainty. In the absence of public access to results and sufficient transparency for several days, suspicions of potential manipulation emerged, particularly in cases where inaccurate data or arithmetic discrepancies were reported between forms and the announced vote totals. The CEC chose not to inform the public of the specifics of the situation—citing the fact that the case was being addressed by judicial institutions—an approach that further undermined the transparency of the process. Even now, months after the conclusion of the process, no official report or public statement has been issued to explain what happened on election night or who was responsible for the failure.**

Despite legal provisions and prior announcements that the counting of preferential votes would begin the day after the elections—on 10 February—it was postponed due to a lack of technical readiness in the Municipal Counting Centers (MCCs), where basic equipment was missing and the relevant **software was malfunctioning. Furthermore, even after the process began**, the supporting digital plat-

forms meant to ensure **fast and accurate data processing** proved unstable, with frequent outages and instances of data loss. In some municipalities, this led to a need to repeat the counting process. Poor internet connectivity and a lack of trained staff in certain regions further slowed the pace of counting. The process began on 11 February in four municipalities and continued with the gradual inclusion of others until 16 February, surpassing any functional deadline for announcing preliminary results.

Moreover, during the counting process itself, inconsistencies emerged between the results **recorded by polling station commissioners and those determined by the counting teams at the MCCs. Around 6,300 ballots were re-evaluated**, both for their validity and for voters' political preferences. Nonetheless, transparency in some centers—where ballots were displayed on-screen during counting and data was entered into the system in real-time—was a positive feature of the process.

In an effort to recover some of the lost public trust and to provide easier access to information, on 20 February the CEC launched a new platform for publishing results, which included detailed data from MCCs and the Central Counting Center (CCC) on both political entities and candidates. This step was welcomed as an effort toward improvement, but it came after the initial damage to public perception and did not fully neutralize the discontent.

From 26 February to 5 March, the counting process shifted primarily to the CCC, where conditional ballots, out-of-country votes, and ballots of persons with special needs were processed. Recounts were also carried out at the CCC, based on decisions by the CEC, ECAP, or the Supreme Court. This phase of the process was conducted with regular presence of political party observers, civil society, and the media, and was not accompanied by major delays, although tensions surrounding the results had already increased due to the poor technical performance in earlier stages.

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The process continued with new decisions by the CEC and ECAP for additional recounts. On 10 March, the CEC decided to recount 50 polling stations, while the CCC requested recounts in other locations due to discrepancies. Following a decision by ECAP, 1,631 postal votes that were initially declared invalid were also recounted, resulting in over 1,000 of them being recognized as valid.

The final results were announced on 15 March. LVV emerged as the winner with 48 mandates, followed by PDK with 24, LDK with 20, and the AAK–NISMA coalition with 8 seats. Of the 10 reserved seats for the Serbian community, Lista Srpska won 9, while one seat went to GI–SPO. Among the non-Serb minority communities, 10 seats were allocated: two to KDTP, and one each to IRDK, NDS, VAKAT, PREBK, SDU, PLE, PAI, and JGP.

After the announcement of results, political entities and their candidates had 48 hours to file complaints. ECAP received six complaints: three from a PDK candidate, two from LVV, and one from the PDAK–LpB coalition. LVV in particular requested the annulment of 18,933 postal votes for LDK and a recount in several polling stations in Sкендерaj due to suspicions about the high number of votes received by PDK’s lead candidate. All these requests were rejected by ECAP. Despite further appeals to the Supreme Court, all complaints were dismissed by the court in its decisions on 24 and 26 March.

Meanwhile, on 26 March, the Basic Prosecution Office in Prishtina authorized the Kosovo Police to initiate an investigation into the out-of-country voting process, without providing further details. LVV continued to contest the certification of results due to these concerns, even announcing and filing a complaint with the Constitutional Court.

On 27 March, the CEC certified the final results with nine votes in favor and two against. Both members nominated by LVV voted against certification. Ultimately, three elected MPs—two from LDK and one from PDK—refused to take their parliamentary mandates, opting instead to continue serving as mayors of their respective municipalities.



Moreover, during the counting process itself, inconsistencies emerged between the results recorded by polling station commissioners and those determined by the counting teams at the MCCs. Around 6,300 ballots were re-evaluated, both for their validity and for voters’ political preferences. Nonetheless, transparency in some centers—where ballots were displayed on-screen during counting and data was entered into the system in real-time—was a positive feature of the process.

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## 10. ELECTORAL JUSTICE

The law sets out clear rules, guidelines, and reasonable deadlines for the submission of complaints by interested parties regarding inclusion or exclusion from the preliminary voter list, challenges to the certification of parties and candidates, various stages of voting and counting, as well as against the final results announced by the CEC. The Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) is the main body responsible for handling electoral disputes, including complaints against CEC decisions specifically foreseen in the LGE. ECAP decisions may be appealed to the Supreme Court only if the sanction involves a fine of over €5,000 or if it affects fundamental rights. ECAP is a permanent and independent body, composed of 11 members appointed by the Kosovo Judicial Council, and currently operates with 10 judges according to the Regulation on Submission and Decision-Making on Complaints, revised in 2024.

In general, the work of institutions responsible for handling electoral disputes has been assessed as transparent and professional, particularly in the case of ECAP, which regularly published all of its decisions. During the parliamentary elections of 9 February 2025, the electoral justice system in Kosovo dealt with a considerable number of complaints, particularly addressed to ECAP. Despite challenges related to capacity, the institution managed to meet the necessary standards in terms of professionalism and transparency.

The election campaign, which started on 11 January and ended on 9 February at 07:00, was accompanied by numerous electoral rallies, where inflammatory and hateful language was often used. Other serious violations were also identified, such as the use of public resources for electoral purposes, the involvement of children in campaigns, obstruction of journalists, and the placement of materials in prohibited areas. By 8 February, ECAP had received over 400 complaints related to these violations of the law and CEC regulations. In total, during the entire electoral process, ECAP handled more than 600 cases.

During the pre-election period, complaints were submitted against CEC decisions related to the placement of polling stations abroad (from LVV, which were rejected). There was also a complaint from the Serbian List against the CEC notification for non-certification, which was upheld by ECAP. The decision to certify the Serbian List was contested by LVV due to alleged procedural irregularities in the CEC's decision-making, but the Supreme Court rejected the complaint on grounds of lack of legal standing. Four complaints related to the lack of distribution of public funds by the CEC were rejected for lack of competence. ECAP also handled complaints from non-majority community parties regarding the composition of election staff and instructed the CEC to review the representation formula in accordance with the law. A complaint by KDTP concerning the ballot design was rejected as out of time.

ECAP imposed more than €612,000 in fines on political parties for violations of the Code of Ethics. LVV was fined €210,500, PDK €144,500, LDK €136,600, AAK-NIS-MA €37,300, the Family Coalition €18,500, the Serbian List €26,500, SRB Demokratija €12,000, Kosovksi SRBA Party €7,200, Za Slobodno Pravnu i Opstanak €3,500, PLE €3,000, Nova Stranka €4,000, IRDK €3,500, VAKAT €1,500, PAI €1,000, and OPRA-ROMA €1,000. It is worth noting that nearly half of the total fine amount was issued solely for the use of hate speech (around €300,000).

Although in some cases, ECAP took into account the immediate corrective measures taken by parties and reduced the fines, some sanctioning decisions were not fully consistent. For instance, for similar violations such as the use of inflammatory language in cases A.nr.27/25 and A.nr.253/25, different fines were issued against the same subject – €12,000 and €5,500, respectively. This lack of uniformity was also observed in violations involving the use of public resources and the posting of campaign materials. Specifically, for cases

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involving the placement of electoral materials by one political subject (PDK), fines varied. In case A.nr.48/25, a fine of €4,000 was imposed; in case A.nr.49/25, a fine of €5,500; and in case A.nr.50/25, a fine of €4,000. The same occurred in cases A.nr.51/25, where the fine was €5,500, and in case A.nr.56/25, where it was €3,500. Similarly, in cases involving the use of public resources, it was observed that a single political subject received three different decisions for similar violations.

A large number of decisions were appealed to the Supreme Court, which in some cases overturned them due to improper verification of the factual situation and incorrect application of substantive law. However, even the Supreme Court did not always maintain a consistent standard, as in similar cases, ECAP's decisions were upheld in some instances and overturned in others. This indicates a need for a more coherent approach to resolving disputes in order to ensure equality and fairness in the electoral process.

For example, cases AA.nr.31/25 and AA.nr.33/25 against the Family Coalition were overturned on the grounds that the statements were not inflammatory or threatening toward the LGBTI community, but rather programmatic expressions. In another decision (AA.nr.40/25), the Supreme Court found that ECAP's decision in case A.nr.278/2025 lacked reasoning and therefore overturned the decision whereby LDK had been fined €5,500. According to the Supreme Court, in this case, ECAP failed to correctly ascertain the facts and did not properly apply the substantive law.

The Criminal Code includes criminal offenses related to elections and provides for imprisonment or fines. Seven cases – four during the campaign and three on election day – were referred to the Public Prosecutor's Office and are still under investigation. In one case at the Counting and Results Center in Gjakova, training ballots were found inside the ballot box and there was a mismatch between the number of signatures and the votes cast. ECAP did not find any case containing elements of a criminal offense and did not refer any case to the Prosecutor.



ECAP imposed more than €612,000 in fines on political parties for violations of the Code of Ethics. LVV was fined €210,500, PDK €144,500, LDK €136,600, AAK-NISMA €37,300, the Family Coalition €18,500, the Serbian List €26,500, SRB Demokratija €12,000, Kosovksi SRBA Party €7,200, Za Slobodno Pravnu i Opstanak €3,500, PLE €3,000, Nova Stranka €4,000, IRDK €3,500, VAKAT €1,500, PAI €1,000, and OPRA-ROMA €1,000. It is worth noting that nearly half of the total fine amount was issued solely for the use of hate speech (around €300,000).

Political Entity	Fines (€)
Vetëvendosje (LVV)	210,500
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	144,500
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	136,600
AAK–NISMA Coalition	37,800
Coalition for the Family	18,500
Lista Srpska	26,500
SRB Demokratija	12,000
Partia Kosovksi SRBA	7,200
Za Slobodno Pravnu i Opstanak – Nenad Rashiq	3,500
Liberal Egyptian Party (PLE)	3,000
Nova Stranka	4,000
IRDK	3,500
VAKAT Coalition	1,500
Ashkali Party for Integration (PAI)	1,000
OPRA–ROMA	1,000

**Table 5:** Fines imposed to political entities by the ECAP



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and assessments presented in this report, as well as general developments related to the electoral process, Democracy in Action puts forward a series of recommendations aimed at improving not only the technical aspects of elections but also the electoral system as a whole.

These recommendations are intended to initiate a **substantive electoral reform**, which should result in amendments to the legal framework governing elections—addressing both the technical nature of election organization and administration, as well as broader political elements of the electoral system. DiA believes that electoral reform should be one of the key priorities of the political spectrum, based on the principles of inclusiveness and transparency.

The recommendations below should be addressed by a range of actors, including lawmakers, bodies responsible for organizing and administering elections, political parties and their candidates, relevant security and justice institutions, civil society organizations, and other institutions that bear responsibility for specific components of the electoral process.

## I. Reform of the Electoral System

Democracy in Action considers it essential that, in addition to improving the technical aspects of election organization and administration, electoral reform must also include substantive issues that are inherently political and require constitutional and legal amendments. Among the elements of the electoral system that are currently generating problems—particularly in ensuring fair citizen representation and institutional functionality in Kosovo—and which DiA believes must be part of electoral reform, are:

1. The current system allowing **preferential voting** for up to ten candidates should be significantly reduced;
2. The **electoral threshold**, specifically its application to different political entities such as political parties, coalitions, and independent candidates, should be reclassified;
3. The **method of electing the President of the Republic** should be reconsidered;
4. The possibility of introducing **electoral districts** should be explored;

## II. Legal Framework

1. **A unified electoral code should be drafted to consolidate all regulatory provisions related to elections into a single document.** This would address the current fragmentation across several laws and regulations, thereby enhancing legal clarity and the enforceability of provisions.

*The practice of codification is recommended by OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission to ensure legal clarity and legal certainty.*

2. **The eligibility criteria for candidacy should be strengthened** to prohibit individuals convicted of criminal offenses related to abuse of official duty from running for office—regardless of the type or severity of the sentence imposed.
3. **The provisions regarding the composition and mandate of the Central Election Commission (CEC) should be reviewed with the aim of ensuring its functional and institutional independence.** This could be achieved through a clearer division of responsibilities between the CEC and the technical bodies responsible for administering elections. Furthermore, changes to the CEC's composition should be considered to balance decision-making with non-political members.

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4. **A clear division of responsibilities between the CEC and other institutions** for key aspects of election administration should be guaranteed, through detailed provisions in the law or specific regulations.
  5. **The decision-making procedures within the CEC should be reviewed, including guarantees for impartial decisions based on the law rather than political affiliation.** The procedures for certifying political entities and allocating public funds should be standardized and depoliticized. Options should be explored whereby votes on the Office's recommendations—as a professional body—are based on the principle of negative democracy: in such a model, rejecting a recommendation would require a majority (or two-thirds) vote against it; otherwise, the recommendations are considered approved. On the other hand, the **formula for allocating public funds** to political entities should be fair and non-discriminatory, particularly for non-parliamentary parties and those participating in elections for the first time.
  6. **A Code of Conduct for CEC members should be adopted, regulating discourse and language used during CEC meetings.** To preserve institutional integrity and a democratic atmosphere, a code of conduct for CEC members should be introduced, including sanctions for violations.
  7. **Special provisions should be included to more thoroughly regulate the use of technology in the electoral process,** including cybersecurity standards, algorithm transparency, and auditing of digital platforms used for voting and result publication.

### III. Administration of Electoral Process

#### For the Central Election Commission:

1. **The CEC's authority to make decisions and issue acts related to electoral operations during the period when those operations are ongoing should be limited,** in order to ensure the principle of legal certainty and prevent changes to the rules during the process. These restrictions should apply to every electoral phase and operation, such as the electoral campaign, out-of-country voting, candidate certification, election day, counting, and others.
2. **The organizational and functional structure of the Central Election Commission should be reviewed.** This includes a clear separation of roles and responsibilities between the Secretariat and the CEC as a collegial body, the functions of the Director of the Secretariat, and the definition of competencies for each internal unit. This would ensure a clear division of responsibilities within the institution, operational efficiency, and increased accountability.
3. **A post-election reporting obligation should be introduced for the CEC, through a public report summarizing all phases of the electoral process,** including self-assessments and recommendations for improvement, in line with the principle of institutional reflection and continuous improvement.
4. The CEC should be oriented toward the **digitalization of the vote-counting process,** to avoid human errors and manipulation.
5. **A National Electoral Education Plan for citizens should be developed and adopted, to be implemented continuously—not only during the campaign.** The plan should be inclusive, with standardized and tailored materials for different target groups, and implemented in cooperation with CSOs and educational institutions.
6. **The use of indelible ink and voting booths should be reviewed to fully guarantee ballot secrecy.** Any voter identification mechanism must be

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certified and compliant with data protection and ballot secrecy rights. The use of indelible ink pens should be reconsidered in favor of electronic voter identification. Voting booths must be placed to ensure complete voter privacy and eliminate any possibility of unwanted observation.

7. **More rigorous training and testing should be conducted for PSC members** before their assignment to polling stations, to ensure that their duties and responsibilities are carried out professionally. Priority should be given to the vote-counting process and to frequent violations such as abuse of assisted voting and breaches of ballot secrecy. In this regard, political entities should also nominate commissioners with integrity and proper professional preparation.
8. The CEC must ensure **appropriate physical infrastructure** for access to every polling station and provide accessible voting formats for **persons with disabilities**.
9. **The daily publication of counting progress should be formalized.** The CEC should be required to report every 12 hours on the progress of vote counting and result processing—including statistics, obstacles, and revised deadline projections—through public statements, press conferences, and digital channels.
10. **A medium-term strategy for election technology management should be developed and adopted,** including minimum functionality standards, independent pre-use testing, security audits, and contingency plans for systemic failures.

**For other election management bodies (MECs, PSCs, MCCs and CRC):**

1. **A separate act should be adopted on the recruitment and training of election management bodies,** including minimum qualifications, standards for

gender equality and community representation, as well as post-election performance evaluation.

2. **Sanctions should be established for members of the electoral administration who fail to fulfill their duties or act negligently,** and a formal system should be created to monitor and evaluate their performance during the relevant phases of the election.
3. **The organizational structure of the Polling Station Councils should be reviewed and standardized by reinstating the position of the ballot box commissioner and clearly defining the duties of each member.** The position of the ballot box commissioner should be reintroduced as a mandatory role to ensure control over the critical moment of casting the ballot.
4. **The concept of centralized counting at the MCC should be reconsidered by assessing the balance between cost, effectiveness, and process integrity.** The CEC should conduct a comprehensive impact assessment of this model on vote integrity and public trust and, based on that, decide whether it should be expanded, modified, or partially reverted to in-polling-station counting with reinforced oversight mechanisms.
5. **A mandatory standard should be established for the publication of detailed data on discrepancies, recount cases, and the final results of all ballot boxes handled at the CRC.** These data must be published in an open format and accompanied by explanations for each case, in order to strengthen transparency and public trust.
6. **“Blacklists” should be created based on the performance of election staff,** including CEC commissioners and MCCs/CRC staff suspected of manipulation or those who performed unsatisfactorily. These individuals should be prohibited from participating in future electoral processes.

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#### Voters' List:

1. **A permanent inter-institutional system for the periodic cleansing of the voter list should be developed and approved, based on automatic and mandatory data exchange between the CEC, the Civil Registration Agency, the Statistics Agency, the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC), and the Department of Pensions.** This system must rely on agreed protocols for identifying and excluding deceased voters, individuals without legal capacity, and those with duplicate records. Verification should be conducted continuously, not just in the pre-election period.
2. **An external audit of the voter list should be institutionalized prior to each electoral process, involving independent organizations or statistical institutions that would assess its compliance with the country's actual demographic data.** Such an audit would ensure public transparency and enable the identification of structural gaps in the existing civil registration system.

#### Out-of-Country Voting:

1. **The logistical organization and transparency of the delivery and return process of envelopes with diaspora votes must be significantly improved.** The CEC should develop special rules for the transport of postal votes from abroad, including standard security procedures, documentation of the chain of custody, and oversight of the entire process by independent commissioners. The involvement of executive institutions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD), in the transport of votes should be limited through clear protocols ensuring non-interference and institutional impartiality.
2. **The deadlines for the receipt and counting of postal votes should be reviewed to prevent delays in the announcement of final results.** Clearly defined timelines must be established for closing the collection of envelopes and for initiating their counting, harmonizing practices with international standards.

3. **The division of institutional responsibilities between the CEC and the MFAD for out-of-country polling stations must be further regulated.** The CEC should hold full authority over the organizational and operational aspects of voting in embassies, while the MFAD should remain solely a logistical supporter, as defined by law and in accordance with international standards.
4. **A fully functional digital platform should be developed for registration and tracking of the application and voting status of citizens abroad.** This platform should enable two-way communication with diaspora voters, notify them of their application status, assigned polling station, and provide a direct appeal mechanism.
5. **An independent and systematic audit of the entire out-of-country voting process should be implemented after each election.** This audit should cover registration data, postal procedures, and the transport route of envelopes, and its findings must be published to enhance public trust.

#### IV. Electoral Campaign

1. **The pre-campaign period should be regulated through clear legislation to prevent its misuse by political entities and to guarantee fairness in the race.** This regulation should define which activities constitute premature campaigning, the restrictions on the use of public resources during this period, and the obligation of political parties to submit financial reports for the pre-campaign as well.
2. **The distribution of government financial benefits to citizens should be legally prohibited within a defined pre-election period** to ensure a clear separation between institutional and electoral campaigning. This could include establishing a "moratorium" on selective fiscal measures starting from the date elections are announced.
3. **Special provisions should be adopted for monitoring and reporting digital campaigning,** obligating

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every political entity and candidate that sponsors content on social media to disclose the expenditure, source of funding, and purpose of each sponsored post. The CEC should require political entities to declare all their official social media accounts ahead of the election period.

4. **The transparency and oversight of campaign financing should be strengthened by** obligating political entities to submit detailed weekly reports during the campaign period, including all online and offline expenditures, with immediate publication on the official websites of the CEC and political parties.
5. **A practice should be established for organizing public debates between leading candidates**, hosted by the media (especially the public broadcaster), with equal participation, enabling citizens to compare political platforms in an informed manner.

4. **Dedicated public funds should be allocated for the campaigns of women candidates** by creating a public financing scheme aimed at empowering women in the political race and reducing structural financial inequalities.

5. Political entities should **transparently disclose the manner in which their funds are distributed to women candidates**, to ensure equal support for all candidates.

#### Financing of Political Entities During the Campaign

1. The financing of political entities, especially during the campaign period, must be improved. **Political entities should open separate bank accounts for campaign financing and expenditures**, which must be transparent and publicly accessible through the CEC's website, another designated portal, or the official websites of the political entity or candidates.
2. **An alternative solution would be the full operationalization of an electronic system for weekly financial reporting during the campaign, integrated into the CEC's platform, which would allow for immediate submission, review, and publication of data by political entities.** The platform should be public and accessible for monitoring.
3. The issue of **financial disclosure for political party candidates must be regulated**, including both income and personal expenses during the campaign period.

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## V. Gender Representation

1. **Legal amendments should be adopted to transform the 30% quota for women on electoral lists into a progressive objective with annual targets leading toward equal representation (50/50),** in accordance with the Law on Gender Equality. This change should be accompanied by provisions prohibiting the repeated use of minimally compliant lists and encouraging gender rotation in top positions on the lists.
2. **The Law on Gender Equality must be implemented at all levels of the electoral administration,** including the Central Election Commission, Municipal Election Commissions, and Polling Station Councils. This implementation should include an obligation for balanced gender representation in both composition and leadership, supported by annual monitoring reports.

## VI. Electoral Justice

1. **A catalogue of hate speech and discriminatory expressions should be drafted and adopted in accordance with international and constitutional standards on freedom of expression.** This catalogue would serve as an official reference for responsible institutions, offering clear definitions of inciting language, hate speech, and expressions constituting discrimination against vulnerable groups. The document should be prepared in collaboration with judicial institutions, media representatives, civil society organizations, and human rights experts, and adopted as an annex or implementing guide for the ECAP and the CEC.
2. **The provisions on fines should be reviewed and standardized, limiting discretion and linking sanctions to measurable and unified criteria.** ECAP should implement a graded system of fines for each type of violation, clearly defining minimum and maximum limits based on factors such as repeat offenses, public impact, dissemination through media, and failure to undertake corrective measures. The regulation on sanctions should be public and

regularly updated to avoid arbitrary decisions and ensure proportionality.

3. **ECAP's capacity should be strengthened through increased staffing and provision of stable technical and financial resources.** Given the volume of complaints and the importance of handling them efficiently, the possibility of temporarily expanding ECAP's capacity during election periods should be considered, through auxiliary bodies or reserve/additional resources.
4. **Decision-making standards between ECAP and the Supreme Court should be harmonized to ensure consistent and coherent access to electoral justice.** The Kosovo Judicial Council, through joint trainings and comparative analyses of judicial practice, should contribute to building stable and predictable jurisprudence that respects the right to appeal while also protecting the integrity of the electoral process.
5. **The referral mechanism for criminal cases to the Prosecutor's Office by electoral institutions should be improved.** ECAP and the CEC should have a clear cooperation protocol with the State Prosecutor for reporting cases that contain elements of criminal offenses. This protocol should include criteria for identifying suspicions, the format of referrals, and timelines for institutional action.

# Annex 1:

## Certified election results and seat distribution by political entity

Political Entity	Number of votes	Percentage	Number of seats
VETËVENDOSJE Movement!	396,787	42.30%	48
DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF KOSOVO – PDK	196,474	20.95%	24
DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE OF KOSOVO – LDK	171,357	18.27%	20
SRPSKA LISTA	39,915	4.26%	9
AAK – ALLIANCE FOR THE FUTURE OF KOSOVO / NISMA Coalition	66,256	7.06%	8
KOSOVA DEMOKRATİK TÜRK PARTİSİ	4,824	0.51%	2
NEW DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVE OF KOSOVO – IRDK	4,688	0.50%	1
NOVA DEMOKRATSKA STRANKA	4,158	0.44%	1
Za Slobodu Pravdu i Opstanak	4,139	0.44%	1
Vakat Coalition	3,471	0.37%	1
EGYPTIAN LIBERAL PARTY – PLE	3,251	0.35%	1
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC UNION – SDU	3,042	0.32%	1
ASHKALI PARTY FOR INTEGRATION	2,196	0.23%	1

Political Entity	Number of votes	Percentage	Number of seats
United Gorani Party	1,734	0.18%	1
UNITED ROMA PARTY OF KOSOVO	1,350	0.14%	1
Family Coalition	20,023	2.13%	0
SRPSKA DEMOKRATIJA	3,271	0.35%	0
PDAK-LPB	2,056	0.22%	0
Srpski Narodni Pokret	1,846	0.20%	0
Yenilikçi Türk Hareket Partisi	1,800	0.19%	0
Naša Bošnjačka Koalicija (Naša Inicijativa i Bošnjačka stranka)	1,553	0.17%	0
FJALA	899	0.10%	0
Kosova Adalet Türk Partisi	642	0.07%	0
Albanian Democratic National Balli Party	621	0.07%	0
CITIZENS' INITIATIVE NARODNA PRAVDA	620	0.07%	0
Party of Kosovo Serbs	462	0.05%	0
Opre Roma Kosova	384	0.04%	0
Fatmir Bytyqi	191	0.02%	0





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