



POLICY MEMO

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Toward a Credible Sequencing Framework for the Implementation of the Kosovo–Serbia Agreements

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Month of February marked the third anniversary of the [Agreement on the Path to Normalization of Relations](#) (often called Basic Agreement) and its [Ohrid Implementation Annex](#) (concluded in March), but the date went by with little attention. There were no significant political statements, reaffirmations, or efforts to highlight or defend the agreement. This lack of response raises an important question: do we still have an agreement?

A few years ago, the main discussions were about how quickly and fully the agreement was being put into practice, and which parts were progressing or falling behind. Now, the debate is more about whether the agreement itself is still valid and credible. Actions on both sides have led to this gradual decline.

Serbia's refusal to formally sign the agreement was followed, in December 2023, by a [letter from Prime Minister Ana Brnabić](#) to the European Union stating that Serbia would not implement provisions it considers contrary to its “national interests.” Although the former EU Special Representative for the Dialogue, Miroslav Lajčák,



indicated that this letter had been withdrawn, this has never been formally confirmed, leaving continued ambiguity over Serbia's commitments.

On Kosovo's side, the position reflects a similar gap between political commitment and practical action. Prime Minister Albin Kurti strongly insisted on the formal signing of the agreement and has consistently presented it as the most favorable framework Kosovo has had in years. [This commitment was further reaffirmed in a joint letter to the Council of Europe, co-signed with President Vjosa Osmani and Speaker Glauk Konjufca, on the eve of the vote on Kosovo's membership, explicitly confirming Kosovo's readiness to implement commitments from the normalisation dialogue.](#) However, this declared commitment was not followed by corresponding action, most notably the refusal to submit the draft statute of the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities to the Constitutional Court, an omission that contributed directly to the postponement of the vote.

DIALOGUE SURVIVES THROUGH CRISIS MANAGEMENT RATHER THAN PROGRESS

Today, the normalization dialogue seems to function more as a way to manage crises than to make real political progress. Instead of moving clearly toward full normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia, the EU's role has shifted to keeping tensions in check and stopping things from getting worse. This has helped prevent serious problems, but it also shows there is little political drive to push implementation forward in a lasting way in a highly challenging political environment. Despite these constraints, the engagement of the EU Special Representative, Peter Sørensen, and his team has remained active and consistent. Throughout 2025, they conducted more than 60 meetings with both parties, maintaining communication channels and contributing to short-term stability. Preventing escalation in such a volatile context is not insignificant. However, this engagement has produced limited tangible progress in implementation and has largely occurred with minimal public transparency, further distancing the dialogue from citizens.

The [EU still says that the 2023 Agreement on the Path to Normalisation is legally binding](#) and forms the basis of the process. The current strategy focuses on four main



areas: carrying out the Ohrid Agreement, managing crises and reducing tensions, improving economic ties, and dealing with humanitarian issues, especially through the Declaration on Missing Persons. However, in reality, crisis management has started to take priority over actual implementation, making the process more reactive than transformative.

Recent events show this pattern even more clearly. [The agreement to implement Kosovo's Law on Foreigners](#) is practical and could have a real impact, especially in important areas like health and education, but it is not part of the official Brussels and Ohrid agreements. Still, it has been seen as a sign of progress. Meanwhile, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Kaja Kallas, has often said she is ready to hold high-level meetings, but these have not led to major political breakthroughs.

In contrast, recent messages from key EU member states to the Government of Kosovo have made it clear that the normalization dialogue and the agreements are central to Kosovo's path to joining the EU. In their letters congratulating Prime Minister Kurti, Chancellor Merz and President Macron stressed that this framework is essential and pointed out the tough but necessary choices ahead. This view was also highlighted during Prime Minister Kurti's recent visit to Paris and his meeting with President Macron.

Looking more broadly, the limits of the current approach show that the EU cannot push for normalisation unless Kosovo and Serbia themselves want it. Both countries seem stuck in a cycle of crisis management, division, and political manoeuvring, where maintaining the status quo is often riskier than making compromises. Local politics, elections, instability, and divided public opinion have often pushed the dialogue aside, leading to a pattern in which tensions are only managed, not resolved.

Finally, the process is almost completely lacking in transparency, which is a serious concern. The dialogue has become more and more removed from the people it is supposed to help, even though its original goal, set by the [2010 UN General Assembly Resolution](#), was to improve the life of people. This growing gap could further weaken public trust and make any future results less sustainable.



Given this situation, it is unclear whether the Brussels Agreement and the Ohrid Implementation Annex still serve as a credible roadmap for normalization. The fact that formal commitments remain but implementation is limited suggests the main problem is not the agreement itself, but the lack of a clear and reliable way to put it into action. This means it is time to move past just expressing support and instead focus on a step-by-step plan based on fairness, transparency, and political responsibility. Such an approach could help rebuild trust in the process and shift the dialogue from uncertainty to real implementation.

CAN THE NORMALISATION PROCESS REGAIN POLITICAL OWNERSHIP FROM LEADERS WHO CURRENTLY BENEFIT MORE FROM MANAGING INSTABILITY THAN FROM RESOLVING IT?

Instead of offering final solutions, this paper aims to encourage wider thinking about the challenges facing the dialogue and the key decisions that will shape its future. It also outlines a possible step-by-step plan for what needs to be done.

After years of little progress, the EU-led dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia is starting to show some cautious signs of restarting in 2026. This is happening while both countries face political uncertainty, Kosovo is dealing with internal disagreements and possible upcoming elections, and Serbia is managing the aftermath of large protests. These challenges make political action harder, but they also highlight the importance of dialogue for maintaining stability.

The agreement to set up the Joint Commission on Missing Persons, along with the EU-Kosovo Government arrangement on applying Kosovo's law on foreigners, show a more practical and problem-solving approach. While these steps are small, they are starting to create room for tackling more sensitive issues, especially the question of the [Association/Community of Serb-majority Municipalities \(ASM\)](#).

This change opens a small but important chance to move the dialogue away from just managing repeated crises and toward steady, predictable progress. However, this shift will not happen on its own. It depends on whether the process can move past crisis management and focus on carrying out the Brussels and Ohrid agreements



step by step. If this happens, this paper offers a structured plan to turn current commitments into a clear and forward-looking process.

To make the most of this opportunity, the EU and its partners need to put in a focused effort and connect political involvement with real incentives. This might mean making Kosovo's entry into the Council of Europe a priority, then setting a clearer path toward EU membership, and offering targeted financial support based on real progress. At the same time, progress in the dialogue should help achieve bigger goals, like Kosovo joining NATO's Partnership for Peace and renewing talks with EU countries that do not yet recognize Kosovo. Without a structured and politically supported approach, the current momentum is unlikely to last.

REFRAMING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT

Three years after the 2023 Agreement on the Path to Normalization (often called Basic Agreement) and its Implementation Annex, the normalization process between Kosovo and Serbia is now in a period of uncertainty. What started as a broad plan for normalization has slowly turned into a process focused more on managing crises than making real political progress. The main question now is not which parts are being carried out, but whether both sides are still truly committed to the agreement.

The main reason for this lack of progress is the absence of a clear, time-limited plan for what should happen and when. Implementation has suffered because expectations are uneven, engagement is selective, and there are no firm deadlines. Kosovo is expected to move ahead with the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM), while Serbia has put off or avoided key steps related to recognition and normalization. This imbalance has hurt trust and made both sides less willing to take difficult political steps.

Given this situation, it is essential to have a step-by-step plan based on fairness, conditions, and legal protections. Importantly, this plan should not be open-ended. To rebuild trust and momentum, the process should be set within a clear 12-month period, allowing for progress in stages while keeping a sense of urgency and responsibility.



The suggested plan is a one-year cycle in which all major obligations from the Agreement on the Path to Normalization and its Annex are put into action step by step. This timeline balances what is politically possible, what citizens need, and the need to avoid the endless delays that have happened before. By setting a clear schedule, the process becomes easier to measure, track, and less likely to be stalled by politics.

In this timeline, the ASM should be seen not as a one-time event or a final result, but as an ongoing obligation that develops throughout the implementation cycle.

The process starts early, with Kosovo submitting the draft Statute of the ASM to the Constitutional Court within the first 30 days after both sides agree on the plan. This step officially begins the sequencing process. It does not mean the ASM is established right away, but it starts a legal process that follows Kosovo's constitutional rules.

At the same time, this step should trigger Serbia's own obligations. During this first phase, Serbia should fully carry out the agreements on cadastre and diplomas. These long-overdue actions offer a chance for real progress and will show whether Serbia is ready to go beyond just making promises.

At the same time, both sides should start putting the Declaration on Missing Persons into action. Doing this early in the plan is important for humanitarian reasons and can help rebuild some basic trust between the parties.

As the process moves into its second phase, the plan should make sure that progress on the ASM is matched by real steps from Serbia. For example, if the Constitutional Court approves the ASM Statute, this should be a key milestone. This legal approval should lead Serbia to carry out important parts of Article 1 of the Agreement on the Path to Normalization, like recognizing Kosovo's documents, symbols, and institutions, within a set short period. This point is crucial for keeping the process balanced—Kosovo's progress on ASM is matched by Serbia's steps toward recognition.

In the second half of the 12-month plan, the process should move beyond technical issues between the two countries and focus on broader questions, such as international integration and the normalisation of institutions.



At this point, Kosovo should officially state its intention to apply for membership in international organizations. Serbia should also formally agree not to block this process. This step is a real test of normalization and connects the dialogue to Kosovo's efforts to strengthen its international standing.

At the same time, Kosovo should complete the process of officially recognizing the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its cultural heritage. This should be done according to constitutional rules and European standards, and within a set timeframe. Taking this step addresses a sensitive issue and strengthens protections for minorities.

Besides the Brussels Agreement and the Ohrid Implementation Annex, the next phase of talks should focus more on integrating key public services, especially health and education. Since these areas directly affect people's lives, they need practical, reliable, and legally sound solutions, and should be included in the step-by-step plan.

Bringing these sectors together should happen step by step, based on a clear understanding of the current situation, Kosovo's laws and institutions, and the need to keep services running smoothly and fairly for everyone. The process should not just focus on legal changes, but also on making sure services are high-quality, accessible, and reliable, since these things will decide whether the public accepts and supports the changes.

Differences between the Kosovo and Serbian systems, especially in how healthcare is organized, need to be managed carefully because they affect governance, referrals, and responsibilities. In this situation, a step-by-step approach that allows for mixed arrangements during a transition period could be practical. These arrangements can help functions and funding gradually line up, while keeping services running, and eventually lead to full integration.

As the plan nears its final phase over the next 12 months, the focus should turn to strengthening normalisation through official institutions. Exchanging Permanent Missions is a key step here. Starting and finishing this process on time would signal a move from just talking to a more stable, organised relationship.



In this bigger picture, setting up the ASM should be seen as the result of a process that happens throughout the implementation cycle. Submitting the Statute, having it reviewed by the Constitutional Court, and Serbia carrying out its obligations all help create the right conditions for the ASM to be established by the Serbian majority municipalities, following Kosovo's constitutional rules.

This way, the ASM is not seen as something given away at the start or delayed forever, but as part of a fair and time-limited process where both sides have responsibilities.

CREDIBILITY OF THE EU WITHIN THE 12-MONTH FRAMEWORK

For the sequencing plan to work, the European Union needs to take a stronger and more organized role. A 12-month plan needs not just political support, but also active monitoring, regular reviews, and real enforcement. The planned monitoring committee, led by the EU, should meet both in Brussels and in the region, including regular meetings in Pristina and Belgrade. After these meetings, there should be clear public updates, including press statements about how implementation is going, to improve transparency and accountability.

This means moving from a model focused mainly on managing crises to one that is driven by actual implementation. The EU should clearly explain the rewards for following the plan, such as real progress toward EU membership, and also consider fair consequences if commitments are not met.

Setting up regular checkpoints during the 12-month plan is key to keeping things moving and catching delays early. Without this kind of oversight and accountability, the timeline and the whole plan could lose credibility.

CONCLUDING NOTE

A credible normalization process needs more than just political statements—it needs a clear, balanced, and time-limited plan for putting things into action. A 12-month step-by-step framework gives a real chance to regain momentum by combining legal protections, mutual responsibilities, and political conditions.



Seeing the ASM as a process that starts early and develops over time, and connecting its progress to Serbia's steps toward recognition and normalization, is key to bringing balance back to the talks. At the same time, having a set timeline adds urgency, accountability, and clarity.

In the end, this approach will only work if both sides are willing to participate honestly and if the EU can act not just as a helper, but as a reliable enforcer of the agreement.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Fisnik Rexhepi holds an MA in Contemporary European Studies from the University of Sussex and has over 18 years of experience in security, governance, and EU integration in Kosovo. He served as Senior Political Adviser to the Minister of Internal Affairs (2008–2014) and was part of Kosovo's negotiation team in the EU-facilitated Brussels Dialogue (2011–2015), where he negotiated several agreements between Kosovo and Serbia. He later advised the Minister of European Integration on visa liberalization and the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA). He collaborates with the European Institute of Peace (EIP), providing expertise in support of the EU-facilitated dialogue and the broader normalization process, including through the Kosovo Civic Alternative (KCA) a civil society platform that promotes inclusive dialogue, supports the normalization process and Kosovo's multiethnic constitutionality. He has provided consultancy services to organizations such as GIZ, IOM, and has authored numerous policy analyses on security governance, migration and regional cooperation.