

From Stabilisation to Accountability

Reforming EULEX in Kosovo

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Executive Summary

The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo remains necessary, but its current form no longer adequately reflects Kosovo's rule-of-law challenges or the European Union's strategic interests in the Western Balkans. Kosovo continues to face corruption, weak judicial accountability, political interference, slow progress in sensitive cases, and limited public confidence in courts and prosecution services. The EU should therefore reform EULEX rather than terminate it. The mission should move away from its residual post-conflict stabilisation role and be redesigned as a narrower democratic-accountability mechanism focused on judicial performance, institutional transparency, and credible rule-of-law conditionality.

This reform should centre on systematic performance monitoring. EULEX should publish clearer public assessments of high-level corruption, organised crime, war crimes, inter-ethnic violence, and politically sensitive cases, identifying procedural delays, prosecutorial weaknesses, judicial interference, and failures of institutional follow-through. This would not replace Kosovo's domestic institutions, but would make institutional failure more visible, measurable, and politically costly. To strengthen local legitimacy, EULEX should also deepen structured engagement with Kosovo's civil society, legal professionals, investigative journalists, minority representatives, and victims' groups.

Policy Recommendations

- 1 EULEX should become an explicit performance-monitoring mission.** *Annual public assessments of corruption, organised crime and war crimes cases would make institutional failure measurable and politically costly.*
- 2 EULEX monitoring should be tied directly to Kosovo's European pathway.** *Findings should feed into Commission enlargement assessments, funding decisions and rule-of-law benchmarks under the EU Growth Plan.*
- 3 EULEX should deepen its ties with Kosovo's civil society.** *Structured consultation channels with NGOs and bar associations, backed by a local advisory board, would ground monitoring in local priorities.*
- 4 EULEX should retain limited operational capacity where acute risks remain.** *This includes witness protection, Specialist Chambers support, correctional monitoring and crisis support in northern Kosovo.*
- 5 The mission should sit within a wider EU strategy for Kosovo and Serbia.** *Rule-of-law reform should be treated as a test of whether the EU can still stabilise its neighbourhood through democratic institutions.*

Brussels should conduct a strategic review with Kosovo's institutions and local stakeholders, clarify which functions should be retained or transferred, and reduce EULEX's executive profile wherever domestic capacity permits. Limited operational support should remain only in areas where Kosovo's institutions remain politically or security vulnerable, including witness protection, correctional monitoring, support for the Specialist Chambers, police coordination, and crisis support in northern Kosovo.

EULEX monitoring should also be linked more directly to Kosovo's European pathway. Its findings should feed into the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, the Reform and Growth Facility, Commission enlargement assessments, and rule-of-law benchmarks. Measurable progress in judicial efficiency, high-level corruption prosecutions, minority-rights protection, and institutional independence should be tied to practical EU benefits, including technical assistance, access to EU programmes, financial support, and clearer accession-related incentives.

A reformed EULEX would be smaller, clearer, and more locally legitimate, while preserving EU leverage in areas where Kosovo's institutions remain vulnerable. Without reform, EULEX risks becoming a symbol of managed stagnation in the Western Balkans. With reform, it can become a targeted instrument for democratic accountability, regional stability, and renewed EU credibility in Kosovo.