

**BEYOND REPRESENTATION: ROMA POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION,
INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS, AND DEMOCRATIC DISTRUST IN KOSOVO**

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Executive Summary

This paper examines the impact of Kosovo's political crisis following the 2025 parliamentary elections on Roma political representation, democratic participation, and public trust in institutions. Although Kosovo's constitutional framework guarantees political representation for non-majority communities through reserved parliamentary seats, the analysis demonstrates that formal representation has not necessarily translated into meaningful socio-economic improvements for Roma communities.

The study explores how prolonged institutional instability, coalition deadlocks, and political polarization have contributed to growing political distrust among Roma citizens. It further analyzes the fragmentation of Roma political representation, focusing on the roles and electoral dynamics of major Roma political actors, including PREBK, LPRK, KNRP, RI and Opre Roma Kosovo. The findings suggest that internal political divisions, coalition dependency, and limited political consolidation continue to weaken the collective influence of Roma representatives within Kosovo's political system.

The paper concludes that the future of Roma political participation depends not only on maintaining parliamentary representation but also on strengthening political unity, increasing public accountability, addressing socio-economic inequalities, and fostering greater trust between institutions and marginalized communities. Without broader institutional reforms and meaningful socio-economic progress, political representation risks remaining symbolic rather than transformative for Roma communities in Kosovo.

Methodology

This paper is based on a qualitative desk research methodology. The analysis draws upon a comprehensive review of existing literature, official reports, legal frameworks, media coverage, election-related documentation, and academic and policy publications relevant to Kosovo's political developments and Roma political participation.

The research relies on secondary data sources, including reports published by the European Commission, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), official constitutional and legal documents of the Republic of Kosovo, as well as reputable international and local media outlets such as Reuters, Balkan Insight, KoSSev, and The Guardian. These sources were systematically reviewed to assess political developments following the 2025 parliamentary elections, the functioning of minority representation mechanisms, and broader trends affecting democratic governance and public trust.

Through comparative analysis and synthesis of available evidence, the study identifies key patterns related to political fragmentation, institutional instability, coalition dynamics, voter behavior, and the evolving role of Roma political actors in Kosovo.

The desk research approach enables a comprehensive examination of the political environment while providing contextual insights into the challenges and opportunities shaping Roma political representation during the 2025–2026 period.

Kosovo’s Political Crisis After the 2025 Elections

The parliamentary elections held in February and December 2025 represented one of the most politically sensitive and institutionally unstable moments Kosovo has experienced since independence. Although Vetëvendosje (LVV) once again emerged as the largest political force in the country, the elections failed to produce a stable parliamentary majority capable of forming functioning institutions. What followed was not simply a difficult coalition negotiation period, but a prolonged institutional crisis that exposed deeper structural problems within Kosovo’s political system and intensified public frustration regarding political governance, institutional accountability, and democratic credibility.

The elections themselves (FEB 2026) already reflected a highly polarized political environment. Compared to the 2021 elections, LVV experienced a decline in parliamentary dominance, losing a significant number of seats while still remaining the strongest political actor nationally. At the same time, opposition parties such as the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) increasingly positioned themselves around opposition cooperation against LVV rather than around ideological differences between themselves. In many ways, the election campaign itself reflected a political atmosphere centered more on confrontation and institutional rivalry than on long-term policy-oriented debate.

This political polarization quickly transformed into institutional paralysis after the elections concluded.

Parliament repeatedly failed to fully constitute itself. Coalition negotiations continuously collapsed, political accusations intensified, and institutional procedures became increasingly blocked by political confrontation between the governing party and opposition ones. According to Reuters reporting throughout 2025, Kosovo’s parliament failed dozens of times to complete constitutive procedures necessary for stable institutional functioning (Reuters, “Kosovo Elects Parliament Chair”). The inability to elect parliamentary leadership and establish functioning

institutions created one of the longest political deadlocks in Kosovo's post-independence history.

The crisis carried consequences extending far beyond parliament itself. Delays in institutional functioning affected:

- budget approvals,
- municipal financing,
- infrastructure projects,
- donor-supported initiatives,
- social welfare mechanisms,
- and broader governmental coordination.

Although political debates inside parliament largely focused on coalition arithmetic and procedural disputes, the consequences of the institutional crisis were increasingly visible in the everyday functioning of public institutions.

For marginalized communities such as **Roma communities**, **these delays carried especially serious consequences because many local initiatives and social programs remained heavily dependent on institutional coordination, municipal cooperation, and international funding structures connected to state institutions.**

In such environments, political instability does not remain only an institutional issue. Instead, it directly affects community-level realities, especially for populations already experiencing structural exclusion.

Within Roma communities, the prolonged political crisis intensified existing frustrations regarding institutional neglect and political marginalization. Many Roma citizens increasingly perceived that political elites remained disconnected from the everyday realities facing vulnerable populations. While political actors continuously negotiated coalition arrangements and parliamentary procedures, broader socio-economic issues affecting marginalized communities remained largely absent from national political priorities.

At the same time, the crisis also demonstrated the strategic importance of minority representatives inside Kosovo's parliamentary system. Because coalition-building depended on relatively small numbers of parliamentary votes, minority MPs once again became politically significant during government negotiations. Roma representatives, despite representing relatively small electoral numbers, gained strategic importance due to Kosovo's constitutional framework guaranteeing reserved parliamentary seats for non-majority communities.

However, despite this strategic importance, the crisis simultaneously exposed how limited minority political influence often remains in practice.

Although Roma representatives formally participated in institutional negotiations and coalition discussions, many broader structural issues affecting Roma communities; including employment, discrimination, educational inequality, housing insecurity, and institutional exclusion, remained largely ignored in national political discussions during the crisis period.

The institutional deadlock therefore revealed one of the central contradictions of minority representation in Kosovo. Formal political inclusion does not automatically guarantee substantive socio-economic influence.

This contradiction became increasingly visible throughout 2025 and continued affecting political dynamics during 2026.

Another important consequence of the prolonged crisis was the visible decline of public trust in institutions. Across Kosovo, political frustration intensified significantly during 2025 as repeated parliamentary failures created growing perceptions of institutional dysfunction and political irresponsibility. However, within Roma communities, distrust toward institutions was often even deeper because political disappointment existed alongside long-standing experiences of social exclusion and economic insecurity.

Many Roma citizens increasingly viewed elections as repetitive cycles of promises without long-term structural change. Political participation itself began to appear disconnected from everyday socio-economic realities. This perception became especially visible among younger Roma generations, many of whom increasingly expressed skepticism toward both Roma political representatives and Kosovo's broader political system, hence the migration.

In many discussions within Roma communities, a recurring perception emerged that political actors become highly active during election periods but significantly less visible afterward.

This growing political distrust represented not only a crisis of representation but also a broader democratic problem. When marginalized communities no longer believe that institutions can meaningfully improve their socio-economic conditions, political participation itself weakens over time.

The prolonged instability eventually resulted in extraordinary parliamentary elections in December 2025. Although these elections temporarily stabilized Kosovo's institutional framework and enabled the eventual formation of Government during 2026, political tensions

and institutional distrust continued affecting Kosovo's political climate throughout the following year.

Importantly, the entire crisis period also created an environment in which fragmentation within Roma political representation became even more visible. Rather than strengthening collective minority influence, the prolonged political crisis frequently exposed how divided, unstable, and structurally fragile Roma political participation remained inside Kosovo's broader parliamentary system. This fragmentation would become especially visible during the electoral behavior and coalition dynamics of Roma political parties themselves during the 2025 electoral cycle.

Historical Development of Roma Political Representation in Kosovo

To fully understand the current condition of Roma political representation in Kosovo, it is necessary to examine the broader historical and institutional context in which minority politics developed after the 1999 war. The structure of Roma political participation that exists today did not emerge suddenly during recent elections. Instead, it developed gradually through a combination of post-war reconstruction, international state-building efforts, minority-rights frameworks, local political realities, and socio-economic marginalization.

Following the Kosovo war and the establishment of the United Nations administration under UNMIK, minority representation became one of the central pillars of Kosovo's democratic development. International institutions viewed guaranteed political participation for minority communities as necessary for:

- democratic stabilization,
- prevention of ethnic exclusion,
- and post-conflict reconciliation.

This approach later became institutionalized through Kosovo's constitutional framework.

Under the Constitution of Kosovo, twenty parliamentary seats are reserved for non-majority communities. Among these, 4 seats are allocated collectively for Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian representatives (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo). Formally, this system guarantees minority participation inside Kosovo's institutions regardless of electoral size.

From an international perspective, the reserved-seat system was designed to create inclusion and ensure that minority communities remained represented inside Kosovo's democratic

institutions. However, over time, the system also produced several unintended political consequences. One of the most important consequences was the creation of highly fragmented minority political structures. Political competition inside Roma representation frequently became centered more around parliamentary survival and coalition positioning than around long-term policy-oriented political development.

Another defining characteristic of Roma political participation in Kosovo has been the close relationship between civic activism and formal politics. This blurred the distinction between political activism and institutional representation. In many cases, visibility within donor-supported initiatives or civic organizations became one of the main pathways into formal politics. At the same time, this dependency on project-based activism also created structural limitations. Because many initiatives relied heavily on international funding and temporary project cycles, long-term political consolidation often remained weak. Political organizations frequently struggled to build sustainable institutional structures independent from donor-supported activities or electoral campaigns.

For many years, political campaigning among Roma political actors remained highly localized and personalized. Electoral mobilization often depended on: Local community networks, family connections and friends. Unlike major Albanian political parties that increasingly adopted centralized communication strategies and large-scale media campaigns, many Roma political actors operated through smaller and more informal political structures. However, recent electoral cycles, particularly the 2021 and 2025 elections demonstrated important changes inside Roma political participation. Political communication gradually became more modernized. Social media campaigns, digital outreach, visual political branding, and online communication strategies became increasingly visible, especially among younger political activists and civic-oriented initiatives. This transformation reflected broader generational changes within Roma political participation itself. Younger activists increasingly began approaching politics differently from older political structures. While traditional Roma political parties were often primarily focused on coalition-building, institutional survival, and maintaining parliamentary representation, many younger political actors started placing greater emphasis on civic participation, public communication, transparency, social awareness, and the political mobilization of youth within Roma communities. This generational shift became especially visible through newer initiatives such as Opre Roma Kosovo, which attempted to create a more civic-oriented political culture connected not only to elections but also to broader social empowerment and political awareness.

However, modernization also intensified fragmentation. As more Roma political actors entered the already limited electoral space available within Kosovo's reserved-seat framework, competition between parties deepened further. Instead of producing stronger collective

representation, the multiplication of political actors often weakened collective bargaining power and intensified political rivalries. This fragmentation became one of the defining characteristics of Roma political representation in Kosovo.

Several political structures emerged over the years, including:

- PREBK,
- LPRK,
- KNRP,
- Romani Initiative,
- Opre Roma Kosovo.

However, despite the growing number of political actors, no single political structure succeeded in creating broad and sustainable political unity among Roma voters. Instead, political competition frequently remained influenced by personal rivalries, leadership disputes, electoral calculations, and pragmatic coalition-building rather than long-term political consolidation or a unified strategic vision for Roma representation in Kosovo. This reality became especially visible during the controversies surrounding the 2021 elections and later during the temporary coalition formed between PREBK, LPRK, and KNRP before the February 2025 elections.

Another important historical issue affecting Roma political participation has been the relationship between minority political actors and larger Albanian political parties. Because Roma political parties generally possess relatively small electoral bases, coalition cooperation with larger political actors frequently became necessary for institutional influence and political survival. Over time, this created a political environment in which minority representation often became dependent on broader coalition calculations rather than independent policy influence.

In practice, this meant that Roma political representatives frequently operated within a structurally unequal political environment where their institutional relevance depended less on ideological platforms and more on parliamentary arithmetic. This dependency also contributed to growing public frustration inside Roma communities themselves. The historical development of Roma political representation in Kosovo cannot be separated from broader socio-economic realities affecting Roma communities themselves. **Roma communities in Kosovo have historically remained among the most marginalized populations in the country.** According to reports from the European Commission and various international organizations, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities continue facing disproportionately high levels of unemployment, educational exclusion, poverty, and discrimination (European Commission). These socio-economic conditions significantly shape political participation itself. As a result, political participation inside marginalized communities often operates differently from idealized democratic models presented formally within institutional frameworks. This broader

socio-economic reality would become increasingly important during the political developments and electoral fragmentation visible during the 2025–2026 political period.

The historical evolution of Roma political participation therefore reveals a complex political environment shaped simultaneously by:

- institutional inclusion,
- fragmentation,
- coalition dependency,
- civic activism,
- modernization,
- socio-economic marginalization,
- and growing public distrust.

These structural dynamics continue shaping Roma political representation in Kosovo today and remain central for understanding the political developments that emerged during the 2025 electoral cycle.

Electoral Fragmentation and the Roma Political Parties

One of the defining characteristics of Roma political representation in Kosovo throughout recent electoral cycles has been fragmentation. Unlike larger Albanian political parties that generally operate through broader organizational structures and clearer ideological positioning, Roma political participation has remained divided between multiple smaller political actors competing within a relatively limited electoral space.

The February 2025 elections once again demonstrated that fragmentation remains one of the biggest structural weaknesses affecting Roma political influence in Kosovo.

Several Roma political actors entered the elections either independently or through temporary alliances, including:

- the United Roma Party of Kosovo (PREBK),
- the Progressive Movement of Kosovar Roma (LPRK),
- the Kosovar New Romani Party (KNRP),
- Opre Roma Kosovo.

Although the reserved-seat system formally guarantees representation for non-majority communities, political fragmentation continues to weaken Roma political influence, affecting

coalition power, voter mobilization, and long-term institutional credibility. As a result, the main challenge is not the lack of representation itself, but the absence of stable political unity and long-term consolidation within Roma political movements.

PREBK and the Traditional Model of Minority Representation

The United Roma Party of Kosovo (PREBK), led by Albert Kinoli, remains one of the oldest and most recognizable Roma political parties in Kosovo. Historically, PREBK positioned itself as a traditional parliamentary representative structure focused on institutional participation and maintaining long-term representation within Kosovo's political system. Over multiple election cycles, PREBK managed to maintain relatively stable electoral support. According to electoral reporting and political analysis, the party secured approximately 955 votes during the 2017 parliamentary elections, approximately 1,078 votes in 2019, and slightly above 1,070 votes during the 2021 elections. This relatively stable electoral performance allowed PREBK to remain one of the most institutionally established and electorally consistent Roma political structures in Kosovo despite increasing political competition inside Roma representation.

Politically, PREBK's stability reflected several important advantages, including established local networks, institutional recognition, long-term visibility, political experience, and relatively consistent voter mobilization. These factors allowed the party to maintain parliamentary relevance and remain politically visible even as newer political actors and civic-oriented initiatives gradually emerged within Roma political participation.

However, despite its longevity and institutional continuity, PREBK also became increasingly associated with many of the broader frustrations visible inside Roma communities. Critics increasingly argued that traditional minority political structures had become overly focused on coalition negotiations, parliamentary positioning, and maintaining institutional presence, while failing to deliver broader socio-economic transformation for Roma communities.

This perception became especially common among younger voters and activists, many of whom viewed older political actors as disconnected from the everyday challenges faced by ordinary Roma citizens. Although PREBK maintained parliamentary relevance and institutional visibility, the party struggled to significantly expand its electoral base beyond its traditional support structure. This stagnation became increasingly important as younger civic-oriented initiatives and competing Roma political actors gained greater visibility during recent electoral cycles.

LPRK and the Intensification of Political Competition

The Progressive Movement of Kosovar Roma (LPRK), led by Erxhan Galushi, emerged as one of the most politically influential challengers to traditional Roma political structures during recent electoral cycles. Importantly, LPRK itself emerged from fragmentation within Roma politics, originally separating from PREBK. This development already reflected the broader instability and internal divisions shaping minority political representation in Kosovo.

During the 2021 elections, the Romani Initiative initially secured two parliamentary seats reserved for Roma representation. However, LPRK challenged the validity of votes originating from Serb-majority municipalities, arguing that electoral manipulation had occurred. According to reporting by *Balkan Insight* and *KoSSev*, Kosovo's Election Complaints and Appeals Panel invalidated hundreds of disputed votes connected to the controversy, reducing the Romani Initiative's parliamentary representation and enabling LPRK to secure representation instead (Rrustemi; KoSSev).

This episode became one of the most controversial moments in Kosovo's minority political environment. The controversy significantly intensified tensions between Roma political actors and raised broader concerns regarding electoral integrity, external political influence, and the vulnerability of Kosovo's minority representation framework.

At the same time, the controversy surrounding the 2021 elections also increased LPRK's political visibility and demonstrated the growing competitiveness inside Roma political representation itself. According to political reporting and election analysis, LPRK secured approximately 1,200 votes during the 2021 elections after the appeals process enabled parliamentary representation. This result demonstrated that political competition inside Roma representation had become increasingly balanced, with no single political actor managing to establish dominant influence over Roma political participation. Instead, electoral support became increasingly fragmented between several competing political structures, significantly reducing the possibility of unified political consolidation. Unlike earlier periods when a smaller number of political actors dominated minority politics, the recent political environment became far more fragmented and contested.

Although LPRK increasingly presented itself as institutionally constructive and politically responsible, the controversy surrounding the 2021 elections continued shaping perceptions surrounding the party during the 2025 electoral cycle. In many ways, LPRK became symbolic of both the growing competitiveness and the continuing fragmentation characterizing contemporary Roma political representation in Kosovo.

KNRP and the Limits of Political Consolidation

The Kosovar New Romani Party (KNRP) represented another important actor within Kosovo's fragmented Roma political environment. Like many smaller Roma political parties, KNRP operated primarily through localized political networks, municipal influence, community relationships, and coalition arrangements. Although the party maintained political visibility, it also reflected many of the broader structural limitations affecting Roma political representation, including limited organizational infrastructure, restricted electoral reach, and dependence on coalition cooperation. KNRP's participation in the temporary alliance with PREBK and LPRK before the February 2025 elections reflected growing awareness among Roma political actors that fragmentation threatened parliamentary survival itself. However, the later collapse of this cooperation also demonstrated how difficult sustainable long-term political unity remained within Roma politics in Kosovo.

Romani Inicijativa and the 2021 Electoral Controversy

Romani Inicijativa (RI) is a political party in Kosovo that represents the interests and rights of the Roma community. Established prior to the 2021 parliamentary elections, the party advocates for greater social inclusion, equal opportunities, political participation, and the improvement of living conditions for Roma communities across Kosovo. Its stated mission is to address long-standing challenges such as discrimination, poverty, and underrepresentation in public institutions.

Since entering the political scene, Romani Inicijativa has secured representation in the Assembly of Kosovo through the seats reserved for non-majority communities. The party is led by Gazmen Salijević and has focused its efforts on promoting Roma participation in decision-making processes, strengthening community rights, and ensuring that the concerns of Roma citizens are reflected in national policies and institutional reforms.

According to Balkan Insight, ECAP later invalidated hundreds of votes cast for Romani Inicijativa after determining that significant electoral irregularities had occurred. The decision was subsequently confirmed by the Supreme Court of Kosovo. As a result, Romani Inicijativa lost one of the two parliamentary seats it had initially secured, while LPRK gained parliamentary representation.

Romani Inicijativa case became far more than a dispute over election results. It exposed deeper tensions surrounding political legitimacy, external influence, electoral manipulation, and fragmentation within Roma political representation. The controversy also contributed to growing distrust among many voters, reinforcing perceptions that minority politics had become increasingly dominated by electoral conflicts and institutional battles rather than long-term

socio-economic development, employment opportunities, and broader community advancement.

The PREBK–LPRK–KNRP Alliance and Political Unity

One of the most politically important developments during the February 2025 elections was the temporary alliance formed between PREBK, LPRK, and KNRP. At first glance, the coalition appeared politically logical. For years, fragmentation had weakened Roma political representation in Kosovo. Divided votes reduced collective bargaining power and intensified competition inside an already limited electoral base. Many political actors increasingly understood that fragmentation threatened not only political influence but also parliamentary survival itself.

At the same time, the formation of the alliance was also influenced by the emergence of newer political movements and younger civic-oriented initiatives that began gaining visibility within Roma political participation. The growing presence of alternative political voices created additional pressure on traditional Roma political structures, many of which increasingly feared losing political influence, voter support, and institutional relevance. In this context, the coalition between PREBK, LPRK, and KNRP appeared not only as an attempt at political consolidation, but also as a strategic response to the changing political environment inside Roma politics itself.

However, the electoral outcome revealed a much more complicated political reality.

Collectively, the PREBK–LPRK–KNRP alliance secured slightly above 1,300 votes during the February 2025 elections. Politically, this result was highly significant because some of the participating parties had previously achieved comparable results independently. PREBK had previously secured over one thousand votes independently, while LPRK separately received approximately 1,200 votes during earlier elections. Although the alliance united multiple Roma political structures, the coalition failed to significantly outperform some of the parties' earlier individual electoral performances. In many ways, the coalition may have actually weakened voter mobilization rather than strengthening it. Traditional supporters of different parties appeared uncertain regarding the ideological differences between coalition members, unresolved political rivalries, and the long-term purpose of the alliance itself. The coalition therefore appeared more tactical than programmatic.

Historically, the participating parties had frequently criticized one another during earlier electoral cycles, and tensions reportedly continued even after the alliance was formed. Despite formally joining forces, political disagreements and internal rivalries remained visible

throughout the campaign period itself. This reinforced perceptions among parts of the electorate that the coalition lacked genuine political cohesion and long-term strategic unity. Their sudden cooperation before the elections therefore appeared motivated primarily by electoral pragmatism, fear of fragmentation, and concern regarding the growing visibility of alternative political movements rather than genuine ideological alignment. Shortly after the elections, the alliance dissolved rapidly, and the participating political actors returned to separate political positioning and renewed political competition. This episode demonstrated one of the central contradictions shaping Roma political representation in Kosovo: political actors increasingly recognize that fragmentation weakens collective influence, yet they continue struggling to build sustainable long-term cooperation even when faced with growing political pressure from both internal fragmentation and emerging political alternatives.

Opre Roma Kosovo

Another important development during the recent electoral cycle was the emergence of Opre Roma Kosovo. Unlike older Roma political parties that were primarily centered around parliamentary representation and coalition bargaining, Opre Roma Kosovo represented a younger and more civic-oriented political approach focused on youth participation, public communication, political awareness, grassroots mobilization, and digital engagement.

At the same time, the emergence of Opre Roma Kosovo also created political pressure on older Roma political parties. The growing visibility of a younger civic-oriented movement challenged traditional political actors who had dominated Roma political representation for years. In many ways, the rise of Opre Roma Kosovo contributed to increasing concerns among established political structures regarding the possibility of losing political influence, voter trust, and long-term institutional relevance. This was one of the factors that indirectly contributed to the temporary alliance formed between PREBK, LPRK, and KNRP before the February 2025 elections.

The emergence of newer civic-oriented initiatives demonstrated that political transformation inside Roma communities remains possible. However, these initiatives also faced significant structural limitations, weaker institutional infrastructure, and difficulties competing against more established political actors with broader local networks and longer institutional experience.

Nevertheless, the growing visibility of younger political activism revealed an increasingly important shift inside Roma political participation itself. The future of Roma political representation in Kosovo may increasingly depend on whether newer civic-oriented political approaches can successfully transform public frustration, political distrust, and generational

dissatisfaction into sustainable long-term political organization and broader community mobilization.

Political Trust, Voter Fatigue, and Community Disillusionment

One of the most important political developments surrounding Roma political participation in Kosovo during the 2025–2026 period was the visible decline of political trust within Roma communities themselves. Although distrust toward institutions affected Kosovo’s broader population during the prolonged institutional crisis, the issue became especially significant among marginalized communities already facing long-term socio-economic exclusion and institutional insecurity.

For many Roma citizens, elections increasingly appeared disconnected from everyday reality. Repeated election cycles, coalition negotiations, political promises, and continuing institutional crises created growing frustration among voters who increasingly felt that political participation was producing little meaningful change in their daily lives. While political representatives continuously focused on parliamentary procedures, coalition arithmetic, and institutional negotiations, many ordinary citizens remained primarily concerned with much more immediate issues such as unemployment, housing insecurity, discrimination, educational opportunities, healthcare access, and migration. This growing disconnect between formal political representation and the socio-economic realities experienced by ordinary citizens became one of the defining characteristics of political disillusionment during the 2025–2026 period.

Across many Roma communities, there is an increasingly common perception that political actors become highly visible during election campaigns but significantly less present once elections conclude. Citizens frequently express frustration that many politicians primarily engage communities during periods when votes are needed while maintaining limited long-term involvement afterward. In many municipalities, political engagement is often perceived as selective and concentrated around personal relationships, family networks, local influence circles, politically connected individuals, or specific neighborhoods rather than broader community-wide development. This perception contributed significantly to growing political apathy, particularly among younger generations.

For many young Roma citizens, politics increasingly appears less connected to meaningful community transformation and more associated with political favoritism, institutional survival, and short-term electoral calculations. Importantly, this distrust is directed not only toward Roma political representatives themselves but also toward Kosovo’s broader political system. Many citizens increasingly perceive minority political representation as becoming overly focused

on coalition bargaining, parliamentary positioning, and institutional calculations rather than long-term socio-economic transformation for marginalized communities.

This perception became even stronger during Kosovo's prolonged institutional crisis after the February 2025 elections. As parliament repeatedly failed to fully constitute itself and coalition negotiations continuously collapsed, many citizens increasingly viewed political institutions as disconnected from ordinary people's realities. Public frustration intensified further because the crisis occurred during a period already characterized by rising living costs, economic insecurity, migration pressures, and broader social dissatisfaction. For marginalized communities such as Roma communities, these pressures carried even more serious consequences.

The 7 June 2026 Elections and the Future of Roma Political Representation

The extraordinary parliamentary elections scheduled for 7 June 2026 represent another important turning point for Kosovo's political system and particularly for Roma political representation. The elections were announced after Kosovo once again entered a prolonged institutional crisis following the failure of political parties to establish stable governing institutions and elect a new president within the constitutional deadline. As a result, Kosovo was forced to return to the polls for another extraordinary electoral cycle, deepening political uncertainty and public frustration across the country.

For Roma political parties, the June 2026 elections are especially significant because they take place after several years characterized by fragmentation, political competition, coalition instability, and growing distrust among voters. Unlike the February 2025 elections, where PREBK, LPRK, and KNRP temporarily joined forces through a political alliance, the June 2026 elections are taking place after the collapse of that cooperation. The parties have once again returned to separate electoral participation, demonstrating that sustainable political unity remains difficult despite repeated discussions regarding the negative effects of fragmentation on Roma political influence.

According to information published by the Central Election Commission (CEC), the main Roma political parties participating in the elections are:

- Partia e Bashkuar Rome e Kosovës (PREBK),
- Lëvizja Progressive e Romëve të Kosovës (LPRK),
- and Kosovar Nevi Romani Partia (KNRP).

The participation of these parties once again highlights the continuing divisions inside Roma political representation. While all three political actors publicly emphasize the importance of defending Roma interests and strengthening minority representation, they continue competing against one another for the limited electoral space available within Kosovo's reserved-seat system. This competition has increasingly become one of the defining characteristics of Roma political participation during recent electoral cycles.

June 2026 elections are taking place within an environment of growing political fatigue among voters. Many citizens increasingly perceive repeated elections not as democratic renewal but as evidence of institutional dysfunction and political instability. This frustration has become particularly visible because Kosovo continues facing:

- economic insecurity,
- rising migration pressures,
- unemployment,
- and prolonged political paralysis.

For Roma communities specifically, these challenges remain even more severe due to long-standing socio-economic marginalization, discrimination, and limited institutional opportunities. As a result, political distrust continues becoming one of the most important factors affecting voter participation and political engagement within Roma communities.

Another important issue that continues affecting Roma political participation, particularly in Serb-majority municipalities, involves concerns regarding political pressure and voter influence. Although many of these experiences remain unofficial and are often difficult to formally document, discussions surrounding electoral pressure have repeatedly appeared during multiple election cycles.

Within Roma communities, these concerns carry particular significance because many Roma families living in Serb-majority municipalities remain economically vulnerable and often depend on local institutions, temporary employment opportunities, social assistance programs, or municipal support mechanisms. In such circumstances, political pressure does not always appear through direct threats. Instead, influence can emerge through economic dependency, institutional control, and fears regarding employment opportunities or access to public services.

As a result, many Roma voters continue facing a difficult political reality. While Kosovo's democratic framework formally guarantees freedom of political participation and voting rights, socio-economic vulnerability can significantly limit the ability of individuals to participate fully and independently in political processes. Consequently, questions regarding voter autonomy,

political influence, and democratic participation remain important challenges affecting Roma political representation, particularly in municipalities where political control remains highly centralized. At the same time, the June 2026 elections also raise broader questions regarding the future direction of Roma political participation itself. The continued existence of multiple competing Roma political parties demonstrates political pluralism, but it also reflects the continuing inability of Roma political actors to establish broader and more sustainable political consolidation. The collapse of the temporary cooperation between PREBK, LPRK, and KNRP after the February 2025 elections reinforced perceptions that personal rivalries, leadership disputes, electoral calculations, and competition for institutional influence continue outweighing long-term political unity.

The elections therefore represent more than another competition for reserved parliamentary seats. They have become an important test regarding:

- ☐ political legitimacy,
- ☐ voter trust,
- ☐ democratic participation,
- ☐ coalition-building,
- ☐ and the future of Roma political representation in Kosovo itself.

Whether the elections of 7 June 2026 produce stronger political cooperation or continue deepening fragmentation will likely remain one of the most important questions shaping Roma political participation in the coming years.

Employment, Discrimination, Political Dependency, and Informal Pressure

One of the most important dimensions of Roma political participation in Kosovo and one that is often overlooked during election analysis, is the direct connection between politics, employment, socio-economic vulnerability, and discrimination. For many Roma citizens, politics is not experienced only as ideological competition or parliamentary representation. Instead, political participation is often closely connected to everyday survival, institutional access, employment opportunities, and broader socio-economic security. This reality became especially important during the political fragmentation and institutional instability that characterized the 2025–2026 political crisis.

Roma communities in Kosovo continue facing disproportionately high levels of unemployment, poverty, educational exclusion, informal labor participation, and institutional inequality. According to reports from the European Commission, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities remain among the most socio-economically marginalized populations in Kosovo. Despite legal frameworks formally guaranteeing minority rights and anti-discrimination protections, implementation remains inconsistent, particularly at the municipal level where many everyday institutional interactions take place. In practice, many Roma citizens continue facing structural barriers when attempting to access stable employment, public-sector positions, educational opportunities, healthcare services, and institutional support mechanisms.

This socio-economic marginalization significantly shapes political behavior itself. In communities where unemployment remains high and institutional dependency is widespread, politics frequently becomes connected not only to representation but also to access. For many citizens, political relationships may influence temporary employment opportunities, municipal contracts, access to social assistance, project participation, or broader institutional support. As a result, political participation inside marginalized communities often functions within systems shaped by dependency and vulnerability rather than purely autonomous democratic choice.

This issue became increasingly visible during the political instability following the February 2025 elections. As institutional paralysis delayed governmental functioning and municipal coordination, many communities already experiencing socio-economic insecurity became even more vulnerable. For Roma communities, prolonged instability intensified fears regarding employment insecurity, delayed institutional support, interruption of donor-funded programs, and reduced municipal responsiveness.

At the same time, another important issue increasingly discussed privately inside many Roma communities is the problem of political pressure and indirect voter influence. Although systematic empirical documentation remains limited, recurring community observations, civic discussions, electoral controversies, and investigative reporting suggest that forms of informal political pressure continue affecting minority political participation in Kosovo. Importantly, these pressures do not always function through direct coercion. More commonly, they operate indirectly through economic dependency, institutional vulnerability, local patronage systems, and broader socio-economic insecurity.

Many Roma citizens privately express concerns that they are not always fully free to independently support political representatives without fear of negative consequences connected to employment opportunities, institutional access, municipal support, or local political relationships. In some municipalities, political influence reportedly extends beyond Roma political parties themselves. Concerns also exist regarding influence from larger

non-Roma political actors attempting to shape electoral behavior within vulnerable minority communities. This creates a particularly sensitive democratic issue because political pressure does not necessarily need to be explicit in order to become effective. In environments characterized by economic insecurity, even indirect signals regarding employment, contracts, municipal support, or political loyalty can significantly influence electoral behavior.

From a political-science perspective, this reflects broader systems of patronage politics frequently visible in weak institutional environments where marginalized populations remain heavily dependent on local political structures. Such environments weaken democratic autonomy because voting behavior increasingly becomes shaped by socio-economic vulnerability rather than ideological preference or policy-oriented political participation. Although these realities are not unique only to Roma communities, Roma populations remain particularly vulnerable because of their historically marginalized socio-economic position.

Another important issue connected to political dependency is the concentration of political engagement around localized networks. In many municipalities, citizens increasingly perceive that political attention often remains focused on specific neighborhoods, family circles, politically connected individuals, or local influence structures rather than broader community-wide development. This perception contributes significantly to political distrust and voter fatigue. Many citizens increasingly believe that political representation benefits only limited circles connected to political actors while broader structural problems affecting ordinary Roma communities remain unresolved.

This perception becomes especially damaging when combined with long-term socio-economic stagnation. For many Roma citizens, repeated election cycles have not produced visible improvement regarding stable employment, anti-discrimination enforcement, educational inclusion, or broader institutional equality. As a result, many people increasingly feel disconnected from institutional politics itself. This growing disillusionment partially explains why many younger Roma citizens increasingly prioritize migration, temporary labor opportunities abroad, or disengagement from politics altogether.

At the same time, however, the growing visibility of younger civic-oriented political initiatives also demonstrates that dissatisfaction is beginning to produce new forms of political awareness. Younger activists increasingly emphasize the need for transparency, independent political consciousness, civic mobilization, and stronger public accountability. Unlike older political structures heavily centered around coalition survival and parliamentary positioning, newer civic-oriented approaches increasingly attempt to connect political participation with broader social empowerment and community organization.

Nevertheless, structural limitations remain severe. Without broader institutional reforms addressing unemployment, discrimination, educational inequality, and systems of political dependency, Roma political participation risks remaining structurally constrained regardless of which political actors enter parliament. The 2025–2026 political crisis therefore demonstrated that the future of Roma political representation in Kosovo cannot be separated from broader socio-economic transformation. Representation itself becomes meaningful only if it produces tangible improvements in the everyday lives of marginalized communities. Otherwise, political participation risks becoming increasingly symbolic while public distrust, voter fatigue, and socio-economic vulnerability continue deepening over time.

Kosovo's Continuing Political Instability During 2026

Although the extraordinary parliamentary elections held in December 2025 initially appeared to offer the possibility of institutional stabilization, Kosovo's political environment remained tense and uncertain throughout 2026. The continuation of political instability demonstrated that the crisis following the February 2025 elections was not simply a temporary parliamentary deadlock, but rather part of a broader structural problem affecting Kosovo's political system.

The December elections were largely organized in response to the prolonged inability of political actors to establish sustainable institutional functioning after the February vote. Public frustration had increased significantly throughout 2025 as repeated parliamentary failures, coalition collapses, and institutional paralysis created growing distrust toward political institutions across the country.

At the same time, the extraordinary elections themselves reflected the deep political polarization that had already become visible earlier during the year.

The campaign period was characterized by:

- intensified political confrontation,
- accusations between governing and opposition parties,
- and broader public dissatisfaction regarding institutional dysfunction.

Although the elections eventually enabled the formation of the Third Kurti Government during early 2026, political tensions remained highly visible even after the new institutions were established.

The formation of the government itself depended heavily on complex coalition calculations and support from minority representatives. Once again, parliamentary arithmetic demonstrated the strategic importance of minority MPs within Kosovo's institutional framework.

However, despite their strategic importance during coalition negotiations, minority political representatives still faced significant limitations regarding substantive political influence.

Many structural issues affecting marginalized communities remained peripheral within broader national political debates throughout 2026. For many Roma citizens, this reinforced growing perceptions that minority political representation remained symbolically visible but practically limited in its ability to produce meaningful structural change. Another important consequence of the continuing instability during 2026 was the further intensification of political fatigue among citizens.

After repeated elections, coalition crises, and prolonged institutional deadlock, many voters increasingly viewed Kosovo's political environment as trapped in continuous confrontation without long-term political direction.

Although these newer initiatives remained institutionally weaker than older political structures, their growing visibility demonstrated that parts of the Roma community increasingly seek alternative forms of political engagement beyond traditional coalition-centered politics. Importantly, the political instability during 2026 also affected Kosovo's international image and democratic credibility more broadly.

Conclusion

The political developments surrounding the February 2025 elections and the continuing instability throughout 2026 revealed far more than a temporary parliamentary crisis inside Kosovo. The prolonged institutional deadlock exposed deeper structural tensions affecting Kosovo's democratic system, including political polarization, weak institutional functionality, declining public trust, coalition instability, and growing frustration among marginalized communities. Within this broader political environment, Roma political representation entered a particularly sensitive and transitional period.

The events of 2025 and 2026 demonstrated that Roma political participation in Kosovo remains simultaneously institutionally included, politically fragmented, socio-economically constrained, and increasingly challenged by public distrust. Although the constitutional framework guarantees parliamentary representation for non-majority communities, formal inclusion alone has not automatically produced broader socio-economic transformation for Roma communities themselves. This contradiction remained visible throughout the entire political crisis. While Roma representatives participated within coalition negotiations and parliamentary processes, many of the most important issues affecting Roma communities — including unemployment, discrimination, educational inequality, migration, housing insecurity, and institutional exclusion

— continued receiving limited political attention within Kosovo’s broader national political agenda.

The February 2025 elections particularly demonstrated how fragmentation continues weakening Roma political influence. The temporary alliance formed between PREBK, LPRK, and KNRP reflected growing awareness among Roma political actors that divided political participation threatens parliamentary influence and collective bargaining power. However, the coalition’s relatively limited electoral success and rapid collapse after the elections also revealed the structural difficulties preventing sustainable long-term political consolidation. Despite joining forces before the elections, tensions and political rivalries between the parties remained visible even during the coalition itself. In many ways, the alliance appeared motivated more by electoral pragmatism and fear of losing political relevance due to the emergence of newer political movements than by genuine ideological unity or long-term strategic cooperation.

This created one of the central political paradoxes visible throughout the recent electoral cycle: Roma political actors increasingly recognize the dangers of fragmentation while simultaneously remaining unable to overcome the rivalries, local influence structures, and strategic divisions that continue sustaining fragmentation itself. At the same time, the recent political period also revealed important generational changes inside Roma political participation. The emergence of newer civic-oriented initiatives such as Opre Roma Kosovo demonstrated growing dissatisfaction among younger Roma activists with older forms of minority politics primarily centered around coalition survival and parliamentary positioning. Younger political actors increasingly emphasized transparency, civic engagement, political awareness, youth participation, and broader social mobilization. This generational transformation may become one of the most important factors shaping the future of Roma political participation in Kosovo.

However, the future of Roma political representation cannot be separated from broader socio-economic realities affecting Roma communities themselves. Roma communities in Kosovo continue facing disproportionately high levels of unemployment, poverty, discrimination, educational exclusion, and institutional inequality. These socio-economic conditions directly shape political participation itself. In environments characterized by economic insecurity and institutional dependency, politics frequently becomes connected not only to representation but also to access, survival, and vulnerability. The analysis also demonstrated that concerns regarding political dependency and informal political pressure remain important issues affecting democratic participation inside marginalized communities. Although these dynamics are often difficult to formally document, recurring community observations and broader political realities suggest that socio-economic vulnerability can significantly influence electoral behavior in environments where access to employment, municipal support, and institutional opportunities

remains highly limited. This weakens democratic autonomy and contributes further to political distrust.

Another important issue revealed during the 2025–2026 crisis was the growing disconnect between formal political representation and public trust itself. Many Roma citizens increasingly perceive politics as repetitive cycles of promises without meaningful long-term structural transformation. Political representatives are often viewed as highly visible during elections while remaining significantly less present afterward. This perception has contributed to political fatigue, declining trust, youth disengagement, and increasing migration aspirations among younger generations. For many young Roma citizens, political participation increasingly appears disconnected from broader socio-economic opportunity.

At the same time, however, the growing visibility of younger civic-oriented activism also demonstrates that political disengagement is not the only possible outcome. The recent political period revealed that many younger activists increasingly seek alternative forms of political participation connected not only to elections but also to civic organization, social awareness, community empowerment, and broader democratic accountability. This represents an important shift inside Roma political participation itself.

The political crisis of 2025–2026 demonstrated that the future of Roma political representation in Kosovo depends on far more than reserved parliamentary seats alone. The central issue is no longer simply whether Roma political representatives will enter parliament. The deeper and more important question increasingly becoming visible is whether political representation itself can genuinely produce socio-economic transformation, institutional equality, public trust, and long-term democratic inclusion for Roma communities in Kosovo. Without stronger institutional consolidation, broader political cooperation, greater public accountability, and meaningful socio-economic reforms, Roma political representation risks remaining politically visible but socially limited.

At the same time, however, the emergence of newer political voices, younger civic-oriented initiatives, and increasing political awareness among younger generations demonstrates that transformation remains possible. Whether that transformation succeeds will largely depend on the ability of future political actors to move beyond short-term electoral calculations, coalition dependency, and fragmented political rivalries, and instead build political structures genuinely connected to community development, socio-economic inclusion, democratic participation, and long-term public trust. In many ways, the 2025–2026 political crisis exposed not only the weaknesses of Kosovo's institutions but also the deeper struggle surrounding what political representation itself should actually mean for marginalized communities in contemporary Kosovo.

Recommendation

Roma political parties should establish a formal coordination council that meets regularly and develops joint positions on key issues affecting Roma communities. The failure of the PREBK-LPRK-KNRP alliance to produce lasting cooperation demonstrates that electoral alliances alone are insufficient for strengthening Roma political influence. Future cooperation should focus on policy coordination rather than short-term electoral arrangements.

The Government of Kosovo should introduce clear recruitment targets for Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities across central and local institutions and publish annual progress reports on minority employment. Existing anti-discrimination legislation should be enforced more effectively, particularly in employment and access to public services. Municipal governments should expand vocational training programs, increase scholarship opportunities for Roma students, and establish regular consultation mechanisms with Roma communities to ensure that local development policies reflect community needs and priorities. Roma representatives should publish annual activity reports, organize public meetings in the communities they represent, and provide regular updates on legislative initiatives, budget allocations, and advocacy efforts. Greater transparency is necessary to rebuild trust and strengthen accountability. Civil society organizations should expand leadership development programs, voter education initiatives, and civic participation projects targeting young Roma. Particular attention should be given to supporting young people who are increasingly disengaging from politics and viewing migration as their primary path toward social and economic advancement. Election institutions, civil society organizations, and international partners should strengthen monitoring of electoral processes in minority communities and investigate allegations of political pressure, voter influence, and other practices that may undermine independent political participation.

Future efforts should focus not only on securing parliamentary seats but also on measuring results. Progress should be evaluated through indicators such as employment rates, educational attainment, participation in public institutions, and levels of public trust within Roma communities.

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