

Building a Common Agenda for the Next Phase

On April 24-26, 2026, in Solothurn, Switzerland, the Council for Inclusive Governance (CIG) convened the next round of the Solothurn Process of senior party officials from Kosovo and Serbia. The discussions focused on three interrelated themes: building a common agenda for the next phase of the normalization dialogue, identifying the benefits of implementing existing agreements, and understanding the conditions that enable constructive engagement. Particular attention was given to recent examples of constructive cooperation, most notably the agreement on the extension of the Kosovo Law on Foreigners, as a potential model for addressing other outstanding issues in a more pragmatic and forward-looking manner. The discussion was held under the Chatham House Rule and supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). This report does not necessarily reflect the views of individual participants, CIG, or the FDFA.

Defining a Common Agenda

Discussions on a common agenda revealed both a clear baseline of shared priorities and several persistent divergences. Participants identified significant overlap in national priorities, but translating this into a politically meaningful and operational framework for the Dialogue will require a shift in both approach and mindset. While there was broad convergence around priorities such as EU integration, rule of law, economic development, and maintaining peace and stability, participants also noted that Serbia and Kosovo often operate in parallel realities shaped by low levels of trust and competing narratives. A central concern was that the Dialogue has become reactive and disconnected from everyday realities, often described as being in a “firefighting mode,” rather than proactively addressing issues and delivering tangible outcomes for citizens.

- Participants emphasized the need to transition toward a proactive, forward-looking Dialogue capable of identifying issues early and delivering tangible results.
- Political will was identified as the key enabling factor, with progress dependent on a genuine readiness to move forward.
- There was a strong call to reframe the Dialogue as constructive, including through publicly articulating and publicly committing to a shared agenda, as well as reducing polarization.
- Several participants underlined the importance of treating the Dialogue as the primary and exclusive framework, “the only game in town,” by discouraging unilateral actions.
- Advancing achievable steps and recognizing incremental progress (such as the extension of the Law on Foreigners) was seen as essential to building momentum.
- Participants highlighted trust, dignity, and mutual respect as critical conditions for progress.
- External incentives, particularly from the EU, remain important but insufficient without stronger internal ownership and political commitment. At the same time, such incentives can help absorb the domestic political costs of difficult decisions.

At the same time, participants acknowledged that some important divergences remain, particularly regarding sequencing and key issues such as the establishment of the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM).

Benefits of Implementation

In an effort to move beyond zero-sum politics and toward win-win outcomes, participants engaged in a forward-looking discussion on the potential gains for all Dialogue stakeholders from full implementation of existing agreements, while also reflecting on the reasons for persistent delays.

- There was broad agreement that implementation would generate tangible benefits, including greater stability, economic growth, and stronger institutional credibility for both countries.
- For Kosovo and Serbia, implementation would advance EU integration, strengthen relations with the West, and improve their international standing.
- For the Kosovo Serb community, it would provide greater predictability, clarity, and security, while addressing everyday concerns.
- At the regional level, implementation would enhance stability and cooperation across the Western Balkans.
- International actors, including the EU, NATO, and the United States, would benefit from increased credibility, improved regional security, and reduced external influence.
- Improved conditions would also support greater investment and economic engagement, while the societies benefit from a more stable environment and expanded opportunities for cooperation.

At the same time, participants noted that significant obstacles remain, including a lack of trust rooted in past non-implementation, disagreements over sequencing, limited tangible EU incentives, and domestic political constraints where compromise is often framed negatively. Participants therefore acknowledged the need to move beyond zero-sum perceptions and focus on shared benefits, supported by credible guarantees, accountability mechanisms, and parallel or incremental implementation. Implementation was widely seen not as an endpoint, but as a foundation for a broader, legally binding comprehensive agreement requiring sustained political commitment and credible incentives.

Factors Making Constructiveness Possible

Reflecting on recent developments, participants identified a set of enabling conditions that can support constructive engagement even in a challenging political environment. The recent agreement on the extension of the Kosovo Law on Foreigners was highlighted as a concrete example of how these conditions can come together to produce results.

The need for such agreement had already been raised during the previous Solothurn session in November 2025. It was ultimately reached ahead of the March 15 deadline to address residency documentation and legal status requirements for Kosovo Serbs. This agreement came amid serious concern that failure to act could trigger a crisis, including the risk of large-scale departures of Kosovo Serbs. Its successful resolution demonstrates that constructive engagement is possible when there is a shared interest in avoiding escalation, combined with political will and coordinated international support.

- A key enabling factor was the shared interest in avoiding crises, which created urgency and aligned incentives across stakeholders.
- The agreement reflected rare political will on all sides, including a coordinated and constructive approach between Belgrade and Pristina, strong EU engagement, and the active involvement of the Serb List, demonstrating the importance of inclusive politics.
- Constructiveness was closely linked to the identification of clear, tangible benefits for all parties, reinforcing a win-win dynamic. These included improved international support and a better image for Kosovo, greater predictability for Kosovo Serbs, and reassurance for Belgrade regarding the protection of the Serbian community.
- The process highlighted the importance of quiet diplomacy and limiting politicization, which created space for compromise. As one participant noted, “keeping the process quiet and free from harmful rhetoric made the agreement possible.”
- Strong and proactive EU engagement, including facilitation and coordination, was seen as essential to reaching agreement.
- Participants noted that this example could serve as a model for future engagement, including for addressing similarly sensitive issues such as the Law on Vehicle Registration, transparency in financial flows from Serbia to individuals in Kosovo, or the return of judges, prosecutors, and police officers in Kosovo’s north.
- More broadly, constructiveness requires:
 - Decoupling the Dialogue from day-to-day political competition, reducing polarization.
 - Shifting narratives, particularly in how compromises are communicated to the public.
- Participants emphasized that constructiveness must be built incrementally, through consistent recognition and reciprocity of positive steps. As one participant emphasized, “when there is a positive move, it should be acknowledged and, if possible, reciprocated.”
- Finally, there was strong agreement that practical cooperation on everyday issues, such as mobility, services, and institutional integration, can serve as entry points for rebuilding trust and demonstrating the value of the Dialogue and normalization of relations more broadly.