



YOUTH

REPRESENTATION AND

PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL

ELECTION 2019



KONGRESI
RINOR
KOMBËTAR



KONRAD
ADENAUER
STIFTUNG

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Introduction

Following its work to observe and advocate for youth representation and participation in decision-making processes, the National Youth Congress requires that in 2019 it will monitor youth participation and representation in local elections. This necessity is due to the fact that political parties in Albania have neither any quota for young people defined by law and their statutes, nor a fair career system within the political force to compete for the positions of Municipal Council or Mayor.

During the past elections in the lists prepared by the political parties for the local elections, the youth were not only a minority but also they were not legitimate, as they were not listed, not because of their career and internal party competition, but because of close ties with the leaders of the party or in the center or districts. So today we have leaders of political forums in Tirana and districts as well, that are not represented in the the Municipal Council, despite being the most voted by the youth in the party.

Through this monitoring, the National Youth Congress seeks to address not only the representation of the youth as a number, in the local self-government units, but also the youth on the candidate platforms, that will compete in the local elections. Today we have the problem of the lack of budget for young people in many municipalities, lack of Youth Centers, social and sports facilities as well. This is due to the lack of focus and programs that municipal leaders have had on youth.

Another novelty of this study will be the analytical observation of young people aged 18-30 participating in local elections, the reasons for their participation and non-participation in these elections and their level of representation by the platforms and competing candidates. For many years, indicators of youth participation in previous elections, have not been analyzed emphasizing such elements as male / female, rural / urban differences or participation in elections according to municipals in the comparative report.

This study was conducted via the National Youth Congress initiative "Youth Representation and Participation in Local Elections 2019" supported by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung German Foundation and aims to study and analyze the situation of youth representation in political parties and local government before local elections.

The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this publication are by the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the donor.

Key findings

- ❖ About 80% of the interviewed youth do not feel represented in the programs and work carried out by the focus municipalities in the last 4 years (2015 - 2019), while 20% of them claim to find themselves represented in their municipalities jobs.
- ❖ 37% of young people asked about municipalities do not know any member of the Municipal Council . 51% of them know only a few, while only 12% of young people know all the Municipal Council members.
- ❖ 83% of young people agree with applying quotes of youth representation in the lists of candidates for local elections by political parties, and only 17% of the respondents are against the standard quotes
- ❖ The mayor candidates' promises during the election campaign 2019, were not based on genuine personal and public electoral programs or in political party programs they represented, but on media rhetoric through electoral meetings bypassing the objectives, indicators, and deadlines to fulfill their promises
- ❖ The Central Electoral Commission and the other responsible institutions for election administration do not have data for participation of young people aged 18-30 in the local elections 2019. The lack of data by age groups, makes it impossible to study the trend of young voters and the percentage of their participation in local elections.
- ❖ In the Municipalities of Korca and Shkodra, youth participation (18 - 30 years old) is increased significantly, dominating by 30-60% of decision-making, while in the capital city municipality, youth holds only 12% of municipal council decision-making after the June 30 elections, comparing with 20% that they owned since the election 2015. No one from young people (18 - 30 years old) was elected Mayor in the June 30th elections.
- ❖ In terms of gender representation in local decision-making, the Municipalities of Tirana and Shkodra have respected gender equality, leading to positive discrimination with high differences, while the Municipality of Korça continues to be dominated by boys and men exactly like in the elections 2015, at 75% in terms of young age groups.

Youth and politics in Albania

Young people under the age of 30 represent one third of the total population in Albania and according to the the principles of democracy, should also represent 1/3 of the class or political decision-making in the country. Albanian youth has often faced various challenges in terms of politics and parties. Political parties often avoid or add to their programs the issue of youth, even when they mention their employment as an objective campaign, referring to the numbers of employees and not how to create job opportunities,

On the other hand, youth political forums have been represented not through internal careers in executive positions in government but through connections with the party leader and internal connections. Even some young people under the age of 30 who in recent years have held the minister, deputy minister, parliamentarian or mayor role, have not been the product of youth forums but of internal connections and preferences of the leaders of the major parties in the country. The students protest was a united youth revolution with or without parties that demonstrated the most lack of representation and attention to them.

In decision-making terms at the local level has been noticed that there is a difference between adult candidates and those selected from a young age. This phenomenon can happen because young people are listed at the bottom of the candidate lists that political parties send to the CEC, which reduces their chances of being selected. In the local elections 2015 only 4.91% (3 out of 61) of the mayors were under the age of 30.



This gap between youth and their representation in government, electoral programs and decision-making has diminished the interest of Albanian youth in politics, and this is also seen in a recent study published by FES “Albanian Youth” where 62 percent of youth admit that they are not interested in politics at all, while 31 percent of respondents say they are not

represented in politics at all.

The organization of political Youth Forums in Albania

The Eurosociatist Youth Forum is the largest youth political organization in Albania. Due to its active history and led by well-known leaders, who over the years they are became leading political figures in the country, FRESH has had an active debate within it on functioning and representation. During 2016 FRESH, as in 2012 organized a national debate and vote on the election of new FRESH directors, based on the principle of primary voting through membership. *Official website of FRESH (<http://fressh.al/>)*

The FRPD, the Democratic Party's youth partner organization at the end of 2015 closed its first historic voting process with the "1 member - 1 vote" principle for its chairman. At the same time, the part of the rivalry vote between the various candidates was the majority of local branches, offering a positive model still unapplied by the DP itself in its local and central structures. The FRPD continues without having an official website, remaining formally accessible only on the Democratic Party website and social networks <http://www.pd.al/frpd/>. In October 2016 the FRPD managed to select the secretariat and the coordinators, following the organizational model of the DP, a model different from the traditional model.

LSI also organized new elections in the **LRI (Youth Movement for Integration)** in June 2016. In contrast to FRESH and FRPD the LRI elections were not based on the membership but on the basis of delegation voting. During the official elections held on June 10, from 2005 registered delegates, 463 delegates did not vote). Among the two main candidates, Floida Kërpaçi won the race with 1035 votes against Klevis Pojana with 507 votes. *LRI has its official web site <http://www.lri.al>*

Other youth organizations of the Political Parties in Albania are:

- ❖ The Young Patriots Club – Youth organization of Justice, Integration and Unity
- ❖ Youth Forum of Environmentalist Agrarian Party
- ❖ Youth Forum of Republican Party
- ❖ Youth Forum of New Democratic Spirit Party
- ❖ Youth Forum of Red and Black Alliance Party

Youth participation in local decision making

Youth participation at the local level, both in politically and culturally aspects, and socio-economically as well, still remains in a low level. A large gap remains between young people living in the city center and those living in the suburbs or rural areas. In terms of infrastructure, access to services and income by 2015, INSTAT states that 32.8% of young people are not part of the job market, education or different professional training.

According to a report conducted by YOUTH BALKAN HUB on the political, social and economic participation of young people in Albania concerning with the political participation at the local level, the number of young people in leadership positions is low. In terms of decision-making only 4.91% (3 out of 61) mayors are under 30 years old. In terms of the youth structures in municipalities, they have not been established yet and consequently bring a low number of young people to decision-making. Local institutions have a marked lack of interaction with the public and especially with the youth.

As young people make up the bulk of the population in the country, they have a very important role to play in further developing of the country and in resolving many issues related to their social, cultural and economic life.

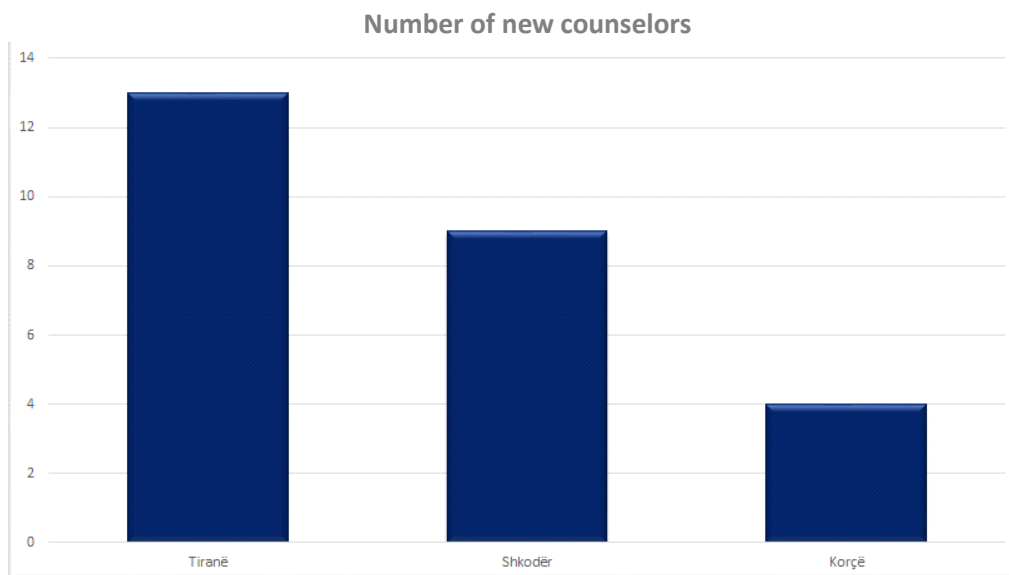
In terms of youth participation in different but mainly political areas, should be firstly worked on the Legal and institutional framework in order to guarantee greater involvement of young people.

The inclusion of minorities remains a challenge as well, because the number of young people, mainly Roman and Egyptian communities, have low educational level and therefore they are excluded from being active in the city, or part of various trainings. This fact also affects their participation in decision-making and reduces equal chances of holding leadership or decision-making positions.

Current representation of youth at the local level in three municipalities. Challenges and statistics.

The NYC staff in this study has included three main municipalities such as Tirana, Shkodra and Korca to analyze the current youth participation in local government and to compare it with the upcoming elections in June 2019. Part of the report will be also a study of the young voters behavior, their tendencies, but also the information they have about local government. Our staff has referred to the topic of "young" age group of 18 - 30 years old, capable to pick and choose, also referring to EU criteria or Albanian Youth Law.

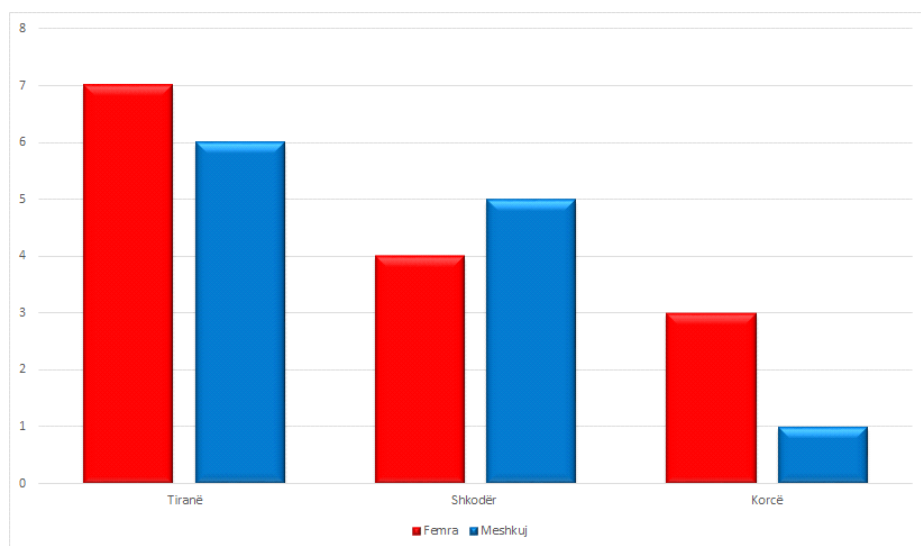
In these three municipalities, none of the current candidates or mayors, belong to this age group and the political parties have selected people with a long experience and career to compete with. Whereas, due to a preliminary



observation of the current Municipal Councils composition, shows that the representation at the local level is different in these municipalities in terms of the number, gender and the party these young people represent. In the

municipality of Tirana currently out of 61 members, 13 of them are young, of these 7 girls and 6 boys, the current youth participation in this council is 21%.

Shkodra Municipality is represented by 18% of young councilors or 9 out of 51, 5 of them are girls and 4 boys, while in Korça, young people occupy a lower percentage of 11% or 4 young people, 3 girls and one boy. 41 members of the Municipal Council.

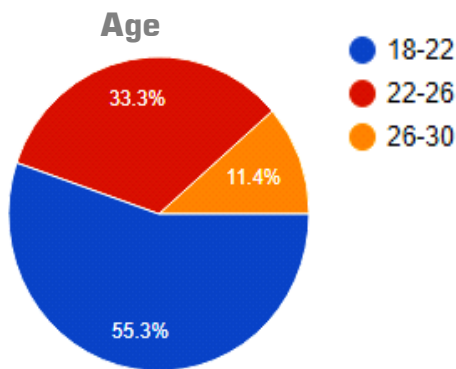


During the 2015 local elections, the administrative-territorial reform decreased the number of municipalities and consequently the Councils as well, a fact that makes it even more difficult for young people to get involved in local decision-making, referring to the fact that the current political parties

are not open and transparent to contest within the party, for primary elections or voting platform.

Another problem brought by reform is the representation of the area or neighborhood by the candidate that recording to recent studies is noticed a lack of connection between territory, population and municipal councilor. In this situation, youth forums and parties need to produce mechanisms to encourage youth in local decision-making through democratic and representative means and compete.

Survey “Youth representation and participation in local elections 2019”

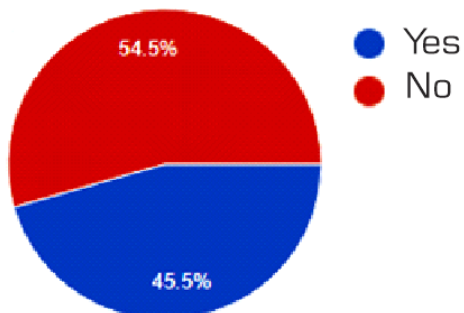


To gather prior background information and photograph the behavior of young voters before the local elections in the three selected municipalities, the NYC conducted a poll with young voters. The poll is conducted during the pre-election period from March 17 to April 17, 2019 and aims to study the behavior of young and the first-time voters in local elections on June 30, 2019, and the level of information about the organs of local self-government

and the level of representation in structures within the party.

Regarding the researching investigation methodology, the data are collected via a random online survey of limited ages in 3 municipalities (Tirana, Shkodra, Korça). The survey has included 340 young respondents 18-30 years old, divided respectively in Tirana Municipality, Shkodra Municipality and Korça Municipality.

Voters for the first time



About 55% of respondents belong to the age of 18 - 22, which generally coincides with being an active student. The distribution of the survey was also facilitated by the assistance of the local partner organizations of NYC. The use of online method is also implemented, because over 90% of young Albanians have access to the internet, realising a weight of the representative population of respondents.

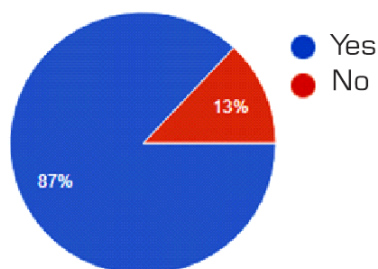
The representation of respondents has a satisfactory gender ratio where 69% or 231 young respondents are girls and the rest are boys. What is striking about the active conduct of young people at the polls is the fact that about 45% of them vote for the first time in the local elections 2019.

The distribution of the survey was carried out with reference to the youth population aged 18-30 according to the data published by INSTAT on the youth population in Albania and active voters in the country.

Municipality	Population weight in %	Number of surveys
Tiranë	70 %	238
Shkodër	18 %	61
Korçë	12 %	41

The participation of youth in local elections 2019

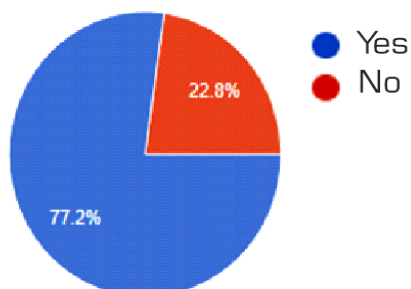
Are you informed about the voting process?



The population under the age of 30 represents about 40% of the total population in Albania according to INSTAT. However, youth participation in the political, social and economic spheres remains low. Based on the data obtained from the survey conducted by the National Youth Congress we can see that only 13% of the interviewed youth are not informed about the voting process and do not know their polling station. This indicator testifies to a high level of information and education of young people

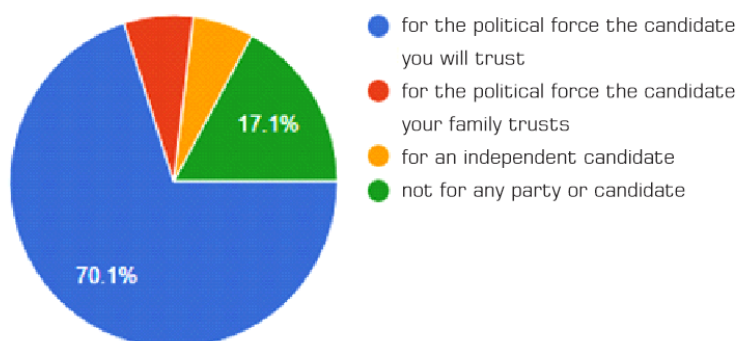
with the voting process, also due to the attention that the elections in our country receive during election campaigns.

Will you vote in the local elections?



Despite the fact that the participation of Albanian citizens in the voting varies from 45 to 52%, the tendency of new voters is optimistic, about 77% of them claim that they will run in the forthcoming local elections and only 23% will reject them. Meanwhile, a year ago, according to a study conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation "Albanian Youth", 69 percent of young people stated that they would participate as a voter in a future election process, which coincides with the local elections 2019

If you will participate you will vote

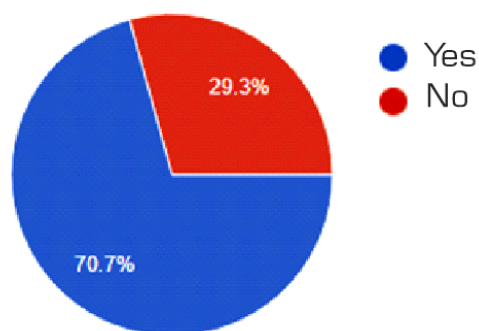


A significant part of young people who said that they are going to take part in the election claim that they would vote for the political force or candidate they trusted, while 17% of them do not feel represented by parties or candidates and their vote will certainly be unrepresented.

Meanwhile, 6% of young people are ready to vote for an independent candidate and 7% of them for the political force that their family dictates or supports.

Youth knowledge about local government

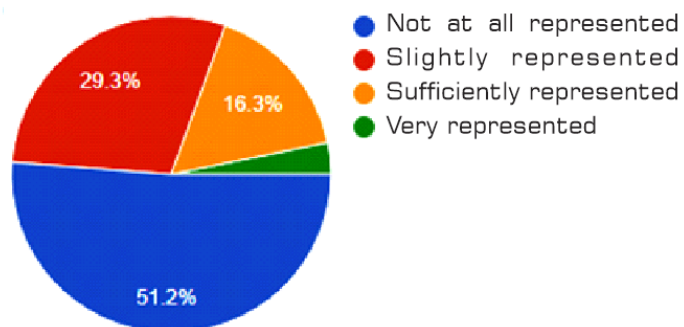
Are you informed of the tasks your party performs?



Taking into account the transformation that local government has undergone after the 2015 reform, where municipalities were empowered and communes were transformed into administrative units, the information on the role and functions of the municipality, the competencies of mayors and members of the Municipal Council are essential in order to move to a smart and attentive voting.

30% of the young respondents stated that they do not know the duties or functions of the municipality where they belong, while 70% of the respondents are aware of the duties of the municipality. This fact can also be explained by the same percentage of young people who were indifferent to the election.

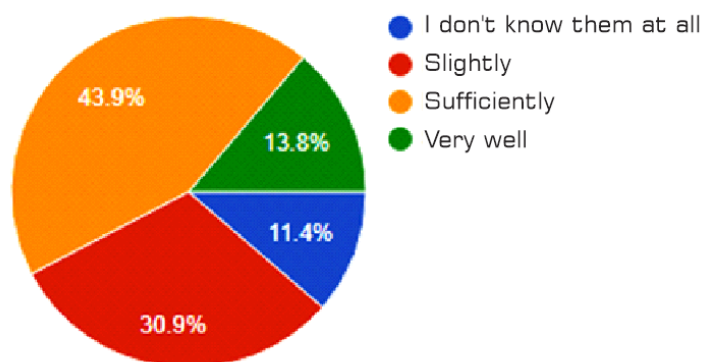
To what extent do you feel represented in the Municipality programs and tasks for the Youth In these 4 years?



But despite the high level of information on municipal competencies, 51% of young people do not feel represented in youth programs and jobs during the last 4 years. 29% of them feel slightly represented and the rest quite satisfied with their municipality's youth work. These indicators substantiate the problem identified earlier by the National Youth Congress on the lack of specific

budgets for youth at the local level, lack of recreation facilities and youth centers in proportion to the population and failure to keep election promises.

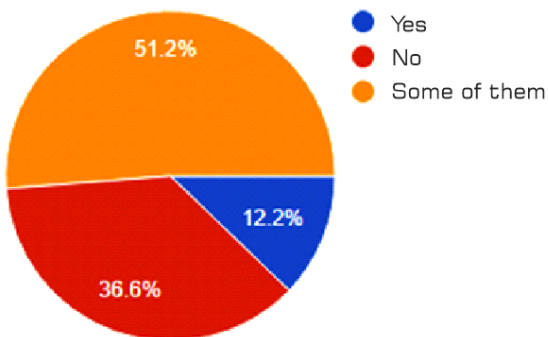
To what extent do you know the competencies of the Mayor?



Despite the fact that 99% of the interviewed youth know the Mayor, only 14% of them know his / her competencies very well, while 44% said they know the mayor's duties sufficiently, while 42% of the youth in three municipalities know little or nothing about the mayor's powers. This lack of information may stem from the lack of participation of young people in local decision-making, the mayoral media show that appears only by

planting trees or inaugurating roads, and the marked lack of public consultation at local level and the functioning of community structures.

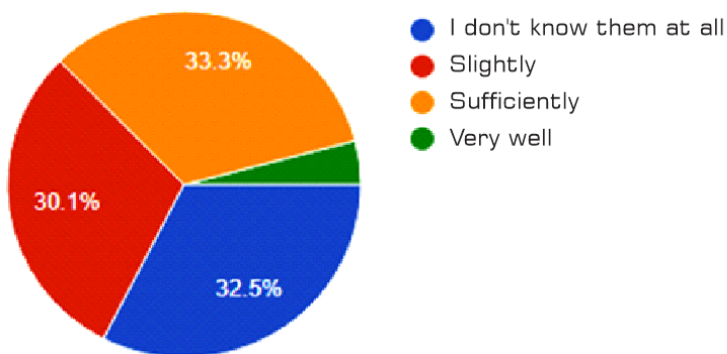
Do you know the members of the Municipal Council?



Knowing that citizens vote on two ballots, for the party and the candidate in local elections, the vote for the party is translated into the number of individuals in the composition of Municipal Councils according to the party list, so we decided to ask young people about the information they have about the members of Municipal Councils and their competencies. Survey responses show that only 12% of young people know all Municipal Council members,

while more than half know only a few. About 37% of young people do not know at all the local electorate through party voting. This result can also be explained by the fact that the electoral system applied with closed lists, does not force these members or candidates to go and seek votes in certain local areas, as they are elected under the vote and sign of the party that they represent.

To what extent do you know the competencies of the Municipal Council?



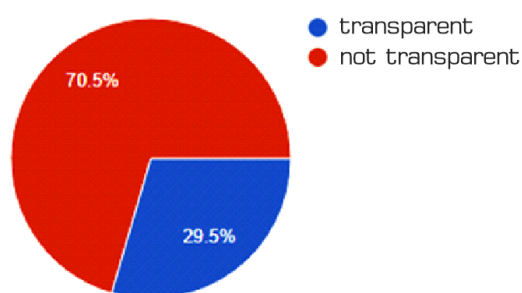
Different from the question to be informed about the Mayor duties, in the case of the competencies of the Municipal Council, members about 63% of young people say that they know a little or nothing about the work performed by each member. Despite the fact that the Municipal Council as an organ

operates in important decision-making sets such as; the adoption of the local budget, taxes and tariffs, the urban plan etc., the dominance of mayors in exercising their competencies and their role in public life has attracted more attention than local parliaments.. Another reason that has created this gap between youth and local elected representatives is thought to be the lack of legal mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making, referring to MC rules, comprehensive public consultations, missing civic initiatives or lack of the Council conception as an own separated organ from the municipality.

Young people's perception of political party decision-making in local elections

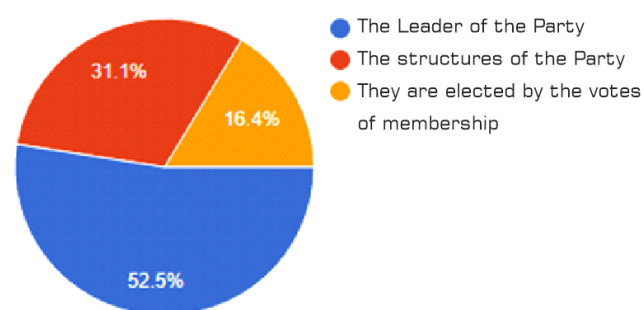
According to the fact that political parties in the country have a fragile democracy within them, the role of Mayor is dominated by other structures, and youth participation is often characterized by personal connections to the leader or promotion in the media more than career pursuing steps within forums and subsequently within party decided to ask young people about their perception of how to select candidates for Mayor and members of MC in local elections.

Do you think that the competition within the party is



Referring to the internal democratic standards applied by political parties, in the perception of surveyed youth, only 30% of them think that the competition within the party is transparent, while 70% believe that the race within the party structures and the nomination of candidates for Mayor and council members is not transparent

Who do you think selects the candidates for Mayor and Members of the Municipal Councils?



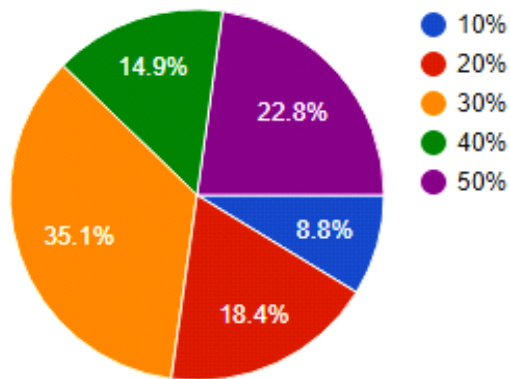
This indicator is reinforced by the next question about the selection of candidates, where 52% of young people think that the candidate for Mayor and MC members are selected by the Party Leader,

31% of them think they are chosen by the structures and only 17% think that membership decides for them by voting.

These data clearly show the reasons of

non-involvement of albanian youth in politics or lack of trust in the parties as the promotion and competition mechanisms themselves are necessarily closed and linked to the preferences of the Party Leader.

If yes, what should be the youth percentage included in these lists?



Due to the lack of internal democracy and youth promotion mechanisms in local elections, the directed question whether in Albania a quota for youth should be applied to the candidate lists in the local elections, 83% of them are pro and only 17% against. After being asked about the percentage of youth that party candidates should have in elections, they find themselves divided into several viewpoints.

35% of young people demand that youth quota must be 30% of candidates, 18% of youth are in favor of 20% quota, while a larger part of them about 23% support of a 50% quota of young people for mayoral candidates and members of the City Council.

Youth-focused election promises of mayoral candidates in three municipalities

On June 30, 2019, local elections for mayors and members of municipal councils were organized in all 61 municipalities in the Republic of Albania. The elections were held in deep political division conditions between the Socialist Party (SP) and the Democratic Party (DP) in opposition together with the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI), where the following ones did not participate in these elections. As a result in 31 municipalities, the SP candidates for mayor compete without political opponents.

On June 10, the President edicted the repeal of the decree for the assignment of the election date and decreed October 13, 2019 as the new date for local elections. The total number of registered voters announced on May 25 was **3,536,016** while only **811727 voters** participated in the elections, or **22.96% in total**

The election campaign began officially on **May 31, 2019**, the day when the National Youth Congress began monitoring the youth-focused **electoral promises** of mayoral candidates in the 3 selected municipalities (Tirana, Shkodra, Korça) and the political programs of the parties competing in these elections (mainly the Socialist Party).

The mayoral candidates' promises during the 2019 election campaign were not based on genuine and public personal electoral programs or political party programs they represented, but on media rhetoric through electoral meetings bypassing the objectives, indicators, and deadlines for delivering on their promises. .

The Municipality of Korça



Municipality of Korça
The elected Mayor **Sotiraq Filo**

Promises in campaign	Topics	Implementation deadline
Modern youth zone with lanes dedicated for bicycles, jogging tracks and modern infrastructure for all kinds of sports	Sport	Within the second mandate
Adoption and implementation of the local youth action plan according to the agreement of NYC		Within the second mandate
ICTS Lab Providing opportunities for vocational training of young people in the field of computer science	INNOVATION	Within the second mandate
New cultural buildings in the center of the city as a space that will welcome young talented artists in and out of Korça	INFRASTRUCTURE	Within the second mandate
Loans for new couples through a Raiffeisen Bank agreement	ECONOMIC SUPPORT	Within the second mandate
Student card	EDUCATION	Within the second mandate

The mayoral election in Korça were characterized by a quiet campaign and a weak rivalry between the Socialist Party's winning candidate Mr. Sotiraq Filo and the candidate of the Democratic Conviction Party Mr. Leonard Olli.

NYC has collected the main electoral promises of the winning candidate for the municipality of Korça related to the youth of this municipality. The promises relate to different areas that serve young people like sports, art, culture and infrastructure. Mr. Filo has pledged to adopt and implement a local youth plan drafted in collaboration with experts and activists of the National Youth Congress.

Mr. Filo is focused on promises related to new technology and information as a mean of developing business and youth capacity in the European labor market. Part of Mr. Filo's election promises was the soft bank loans model applied by the Tirana municipality to accommodate young couples.

The Municipality of Shkodra



Municipality of Shkodra
The elected Mayor **Valdrin Pjetri**

Promises in campaign	Topics	Implementation deadline
Contemporary sports center and sport museum	SPORT	On first mandate
Museum of science	EDUCATION	On first mandate
Reconstruction of "Migjeni" Theater	CULTURE	On first mandate
Construction of new schools and reconstruction of existing kindergartens	INFRASTRUCTURE	On first mandate
Youth participation in the decisions of the Municipal Council	PARTICIPATION	On first mandate
Students Card	EDUCATION	2019-2020
Financing scheme for Start UP youth businesses	EMPLOYMENT	On first mandate

There was no contest in the municipality of Shkodra, as the elections were held with a single candidate of the Socialist Party, Mr. Valdin Pjetri who was elected Mayor with only 10.33% of the total voters of this municipality. During the campaign period Mr. Pjetri promised a series of initiatives that he would undertake for youth during his mandate such as the Student Card, Start-Up funding businesses for youth or the involvement of young people in decision-making. On August 15, 2019 Mr. Peter resigned from the mandate of the elected mayor because of the publication of documents proving that he had been convicted in the Italian state by a court verdict and this fact was not made public in the decriminalization form filed with the Central Election Commission.

The Municipality of Tirana



Municipality of Tirana
The elected Mayor **Erion Veliaj**

Promises in campaign	Topics	Implementation deadline
Each student will be provided with a Student Card	EDUCATION	14 October
Each student will be provided with a reduced price transport subscription	EDUCATION	14 October
Reconstruction of all dormitories in Student City, 180 new rooms	INFRASTRUCTURE	2019-2020
30% of the SP candidates in the municipal council will be young people	DECISION-MAKING	Within the second mandate
University campus in Student City with 11 buildings, libraries and study facilities	EDUCATION	Within the second mandate
Restoration and reconstruction of the University of the Arts building	INFRASTRUCTURE	Within the second mandate
4 new schools will be built: 1-"Nane Tereza" near the Agricultural University 2-"Kristo Frasheri" in Don Bosko area 3-School near "Shqiponja" roundabout 4-School in Astiri area where it intersect with Lana	INFRASTRUCTURE	Within the second mandate
There will be no lesson with two tours in Tirana	INFRASTRUCTURE	Within the second mandate
Pyramid a Youth Center (In these 4 years Pyramid will serve young couples taking various computer courses, cultural facilities and enabling any organization to have adaptable youth training facilities)	INFRASTRUCTURE	Within the second mandate
Construction of an Olympic Park. "In the next mandate we will build an Olympic park that will serve young people with different sports facilities. "Construction of a new theater with modern conditions according to European standards.	INFRASTRUCTURE	Within the second mandate

