



INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IN POLITICAL PARTIES IN ALBANIA

ANNUAL REPORT - 2016

Afrim Krasniqi

INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IN POLITICAL PARTIES
IN ALBANIA
ANNUAL REPORT - 2016

The publication was enabled by:

“Friedrich Ebert” Foundation

Tirana Office

Rr. „Abdi Toptani“, Torre Drin, Kati 3-të, Kutia Postare 1418

Tirana, Albania

Tel: +355 04 2250986 / 04 2273306: Fax: +355 04 22622067

www.fes-tirana.org

Year of Publication: 2017

Design and print: Albdesign PSP

ISBN: 978-9928-215-13-0

Author: Prof. Asc. Dr. Afrim Krasniqi

Assisted by:

Ardita Reçi

Ervin Karamuço

Silvana Jaupaj

Translated to English by: Adelina Albrahimi

Friedrich Ebert Foundation's publications cannot be used for commercial purposes without a prior written approval.

■ Table of Content

1.	Introduction.....	5
2.	Scope of monitoring.....	7
3.	Methodology.....	8
4.	Main findings.....	9
5.	Main recommendations.....	13
6.	Reports on internal democracy in political parties.....	15
6.1.	IPD in the Socialist Party (SP).....	15
6.2.	IPD in the Democratic Party (DP).....	21
6.3.	IPD in the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI).....	25
6.4.	IPD in the Justice, Integration and Unity Party (JIUP).....	27
6.5.	IPD in the Republican Party (RP).....	28
6.6.	IPD in the Union for Human Rights Party (UHRP).....	28
6.7.	IPD in the small parliamentary parties.....	29
6.8.	IPD in the new political parties.....	30
6.9.	IPD in FRESH: new developments and problems.....	30
6.10.	IPD in FRPD: new developments and problems.....	31
6.11.	IPD in LRI: new developments and problems.....	32
7.	Political parties and their online official activity.....	33
8.	IPD: main findings of political parties in Vlora.....	34
9.	IPD: main findings of political parties in Shkodër.....	39
10.	Report: Parties and party funding.....	42
Annexes:		
1.	www.politike.al database.....	51
2.	Acts of establishment of the main political parties.....	51
3.	IPD monitoring reports in media.....	53



Introduction

The problems of internal democracy in political parties (IPD) remain an important indicator in the quality of democracy and political pluralism in Albania. In the course of 2016, we noted a return to the political and public discourse on the IPD debate, attracting a wide range of public stakeholders, including political parties, media and civil groups.

- The Albanian Constitution (Article 9) obligates the political parties to be organized in accordance with the democratic principles, and to disclose their financial resources and expenses. The legislation on political parties specifies the principles and standards related to the democratic rules of operation of political parties, but has failed to establish institutional mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the law.
- According to the Law “On political parties” (of 2000, as amended in 2011), any change in the election of governing bodies, in the organization of Congresses, changes in the party Statutes and the program are reflected in the respective file of a political party at the First Instance Court of Tirana.
- Besides the Constitution and legislation, political parties operate on basis of their internal statutes. Each party has lodged its Statute with the relevant Court of jurisdiction. The comparison between statutory provisions and their practical application shows that there is significant difference between the political parties and that the statute has significantly lost its importance as a guiding document and its regulating role in political parties.
- The Parliament of Albania is composed of several political parties with parliamentary representation. They are: the SP, DP, SMI, JIUP, RP, UHRP, CDP, AEP, MND, PCC, and some others. Some of them (MND, CDP, AEP, and JIUP and RP partially are indirectly represented in the Parliament through the proportional list of the two major parties, or are identified via transition of the political affiliation of the MPs.



■ SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

This monitoring and research work is carried out in the context of the Project on monitoring of internal democracy in political parties, conducted by the Institute of Political Studies (www.isp.com.al) and supported by the “Friedrich Ebert Stiftung” Foundation. The ISP staff have intensively monitored the electoral and statutory practices of political activity during 2016 in order to introduce their first report on internal party democracy (IPD) in 26 years of political pluralism in Albania.

- In service of the Project, the ISP has generated the www.politike.al online database for professional information, reports and analysis on political parties in Albania, the region and beyond. The ISP has published data on the history of political parties, acts prior to the adoption of each parliamentary party, historical and current data for any election process of political parties, professional analysis on relations of the parties with the law and of their organizational and identity evolution, etc. The database has become a source of reference for the major media outlets in the country, researchers, politicians and authors having an interest in the partisan and political developments in Albania. The success of such database shows of the great public need for public transparency on political parties, but also of the dominant role of the parties and their concerns over the daily public debates.
- The www.politike.al database reflects the best practices of internal democracy in political parties in the region and in European countries, offers professional studies on IPD, on the Albanian and European legislation on political parties, elections and the IPD, and specific aspects of the study report focus on the activity of political parties.
- About 30% of the materials were ensured through cooperation with the District Court of Tirana, in the framework of the law on the right to information on official documents. This category of information includes court decisions on approval of political parties' requests for establishment over the years, first party programs and statutes, and other data filed with the court, according to the Law. Another part, that is about 20% of the materials contained in the database, were obtained through direct contact and communication with the political parties' offices. The remaining 50% of the information was collected through private routes, from individuals who have conducted studies or have personal archives on political parties, legislation and elections in Albania.
- This reading of percentages of resources serves to underline an important conclusion: the court does not have complete data because political parties do not observe the law to file their periodical changes with the court and the political parties have no historical archives, are not transparent and have no interest in the publication of their documents online with free public access.

■ METHODOLOGY OF MONITORING

- The monitoring process was targeted at several directions: namely in monitoring the official acts of political parties (programs, regulations, statutes, guidelines, etc.), monitoring of practical activity and electoral activity of political parties, as well as in monitoring of specific political parties both at the national level and at the local level, (Vlora, Shkodra). Part of the methodology was also the active monitoring of electoral processes in the main political parties, monitoring of media reports on the elections, as well as specific surveys conducted by various delegates or officials of different political parties.
- The report focuses on the main political parties, the SP and DP, the third political party in the country, the SMI, as well as smaller parliamentary parties, as the likes of JIUO, RP, HRUP and DNFP. Subjected to monitoring were also some parties with indirect parliamentary representation, such as the CDP, MDP, and EAP, as well as the new political SFIDA and LIBRA. Part of the monitoring exercise were also the youth forums of the three major parties, respectively FRESH, FRPD and LRI. Women's Forums of the three major parties have had no elections during 2016. This is the reason why they were not subjected to active and periodic monitoring. The aim is to create a full picture of the indicators of internal democracy in political parties.

■ MAIN FINDINGS ON INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IN POLITICAL PARTIES

1. One-year developments of internal democracy in the main parties have reinforced the vertical and nominal management system of political parties in Albania. The priority policy agenda has contributed to limiting the space for debate within parties. For example, the justice reform has *de facto* forced individuals or factions within parties to unify their votes and to leave aside their internal political debates for several months.
2. Even during 2016, cross-party negotiations, especially on the occasion of the judicial reform, were based directly on the communication between the party heads, without regular consultations with the party chairmanship and with no statutory decision through the party chairmanship, Assembly or parliamentary groups.
3. No political party has observed its Statute and obligation for periodic meetings of the National Assembly/National Council of the party chairmanship and other party decision-making structures. The DP has the most negative outcome in this regard, and the SP, although having more meetings, has failed to ensure an active agenda and debate amongst its structures. They act mainly as political tribunes for speeches of the party leaders, while under party statutes, they are mainly controlling and decision-making bodies.
4. The parties continued to apply mainly nominal decision-making (with orders, instructions, etc.), avoiding written statutory public acts. Losing “footprints” is a deviation from the spirit of the law on political parties and from the political parties’ operational rules, which oblige parties to disclose all political decisions and acts.
5. Statutory practices of internal democracy continue to be formal; the parties apply extra standards in handling real critics of the official line, most of them outside the statutory definition and in a personalized form of relations between the party leader and the critics.
6. A positive development during 2016 was the trend of the main parties to return to education and training forms of political democracy. The SP got back to the practice of training activities with “Qemal Stafa” Foundation, the DP applied for the first time the Political Academy with the “Foundation for Freedom and Democracy” and the SMI’s LRI was engaged with the Youth Academy in Jalë. Even other smaller parties were regularly involved in national and international training activities held in Tirana. Special merit in this regard should be dedicated to the international political foundations assisting political parties in Albania, such as Friedrich Ebert, Konrad Adenauer, National Democratic Institute, Hanns Seidel, etc.
7. The Law “On the Right to Information” (2014) provides for the issue of transparency as an evaluation criteria and a minimum standard for any public institution and, indirectly, this is applicable as well for political parties as organizations performing legal public activity and having public officials. The parties themselves are active promoters and monitoring subjects of this law, but within them, they refuse to be subject to the law and did not even meet the minimum standards of the law. The parties are closed to the public and refuse public transparency and accountability.
8. The Albanian legislation on political parties is incomplete and confusing. Monitoring conducted by the ISP shows that only 12 out of 126 political parties registered with the courts have periodically reported to various court, as required by law. The rest of the political parties have ignored such legal obligations, while some political parties still appear having active leaders persons who have

already passed away. Fictitiousness of political parties is recognized by the CEC, the body that in its 2015 annual report states that out of 118 political parties that should be audited upon, 71 political parties could not be contacted by the auditors contracted by the Central Elections Commission.

9. The justice reform establishes, *inter alia*, the criteria for the judicial candidates. According to it, such candidates should not have been part of the management structures of political parties within the past 10 years. With the law on political parties and their *modus operandi*, as well as with the formal information on official websites it is impossible to meet this requirement, namely to verify the party structures in the last decade. The parties fail to disclose with the courts the changes in their structures, but only give the name and address of the party leader, which is information with no importance from the comprehensive concept of public transparency and the requirements deriving from the justice reform legislation.
10. Referring to a minimum standard of public information, 97% of political parties have no website, no media office or other public source of information related to the program, structure, activity and their data. No party has published online their election outcomes, local structures, structures within the party statutory frames, statutory and programmatic changes, regulations, etc. They consider these elements as internal party matters, while in fact they remain matters of public interest. The main parliamentary parties, namely the SP, DP, SMI, PJIU, have partly updated websites. Other parties in the Parliament, as CDP, HRUP, RP and others have inactive websites, whereas the remaining parties have no effective webpage.
11. The main political parties (SP, DP, SMI) dominate the official announcements on the activities and public statements of the party leaders and the management team, but they lack updates on the activity of other structures, and there is a complete lack of critical thoughts from individuals or factions in the party even when their opinions make up for headlines in the print and visual media. The parties are increasingly identified with the name of the political leader and this negative trait reflects the disproportionate nature between the news generated by the parties for the chairman and the news generated for the rest of the political party.
12. The main political parties' activity is covered by the social networks, which have a wide audience, but do not have the value of reference, of stable archives and of facts. Social networks are used mainly for denigrating the other party/ies and for awareness campaigns, not for consulting network, communication and exchange of opinions on certain political attitudes. They have minimal costs, create headlines in the media, promote political leaders, are supported by militant groups, but being virtual and abusive, leave no "footprints" of political views about the leader or party, or constantly change the news reflecting daily interests.
13. The official websites of each political party contain no official acts adopted by the party chairmanship, instructions of the party leaders, monitoring and analysis or reports, and acts as proposed for debate in its membership, as draft programs and draft ideas on which party membership/vertical structures can discuss about and give opinions upon. Party archives are closed to the public, thus the inability to be informed and know about the official acts disables monitoring of lawfulness and quality of their preparation and implementation.
14. The websites of each political party completely lacks historical information of the party activity, data on elections in years, or information over management structures, information on sources of funding or relations with local or foreign partners. Financial and activity reports are formal, and without verification mechanisms. Parties appear much poorer than they really are and, taking advantage of legal gaps, create fictitious annual reporting system.

15. The SP, DP, and SMI websites contain no actualized publications on the number of members, branches in districts, addresses of branches in districts, contact details or other data that make up for the minimum standards of the law on public access to information. The lack of legal obligations for membership and the membership database, as well as of mechanisms to monitor the accuracy of such database, are associated with fictitious or contested vote processes in the party's local and central levels.
16. The SP, DP, and SMI and other political parties' websites do not provide baseline data (on the statute, party programme, elections, chairmanship, regulations, working practices and decision-making) associated with their partner organizations, youth organizations and women forums. There is no single case when a political youth or women/girls forum is self-organized and creates public identity, but the general practice is that partner organizations are loyal advocates to the party leader, and, consequently, are controlled by him.
17. Of all the parliamentary parties, only the DP has published the National Council lists. Other parties, including the SP and the SMI have no public data on their members in the National Assembly/Steering Committee. A verification of the lists shows that a number of officials have discrepancies of their political engagement with their legal status as civil servants, or public officials. Also, it turns out that traditionally, the opposition parties have fewer violations of this provision because their officials are mainly unemployed, or deal with non-governmental activities.
18. The Albanian parties' political organization, unlike the statutory hierarchy approved by the court, is moving towards centralized decision-making, primarily through the creation of parallel structures (chairmanship and secretariat, coordinators and charge d'affairs, small chairmanship and big chairmanship, parliamentary group and chairmanship, etc.), or the use of quotas (gender and youth quota) as a mechanism for limiting career candidates falling outside boundaries of such quotas.
19. The statutory documents of political parties cite their legitimate structures and mandates, but over the last years the main parties are applying the system of political and executive action through the parliamentary group structure, which has important role in statutory documents, and suffers from functioning problems, because some MPs are not necessarily party members. Meetings of the parliamentary group are chaired by the party heads, not the chairman of the parliamentary groups, while the JIUP's and RP's parliamentary groups are fictitious, with MPs donated by the two major parties, respectively the SP and DP.
20. The parties reflect a lack of internal mechanisms to consider and resolve disputes between structures and individuals having a political status. The warning on the exclusion of two criticising MPs in the SP, three criticising MPs in the DP and the exclusion of an MP from the SMI show that nothing can stop the political leader to do so, except for the electoral cost that the party may have to pay. In each case the committees and structures of statutory guarantees, i.e. the internal statutory courts, were not functional and continue to be in such a status.
21. Despite commitment of political parties to apply de-criminalization standards in their internal electoral and promotional processes, as of now, no political party, neither the SP nor the DP, or the LSI, or any other party, have held any inaugural meeting of the body to be charged with control and evaluation powers.
22. No political party has yet adopted specific decisions, which, based on statutory documents, apply in cases where persons are arrested, convicted, commit crimes or violate codes of ethics and are subject to the de-criminalization law. Even in cases of public scandals (the scandals by the media,

dismissal from office, arrests, detentions, resignations due to scandals, etc.) of officials holding party functions, the parties themselves have failed to act and formally remove the political support and thus have not applied their statutory responsibilities, or the high standards they have promised in the debate on decriminalization.

23. Despite the Constitutional obligation (Article 9), according to which the political parties should always make their funding sources public, except for SMI partially, no other political party discloses their major financial data (expenses for public activities).
24. The small political parties have started to have movements within them and in relation to the bigger parties, mainly in efforts to have proper electoral calculations for the Spring 2017 elections and always based on personal preferences of their leaders.
25. Organizational shortcomings and minimum standards in the internal democracy in political parties are reflected even in their satellite organizations, youth forums and women forums. The tendency to have full control over such organizations, to limit their scope of activity and to transform them in structures loyal to the party leaders is a concerning and dominant feature of the last decade.
26. The youth party structures are and remain active, although more than being representative structures of the young generation, they mostly appear as imitating and strongly advocating for stances of the respective political party leaders, thus significantly harming the representative power, autonomy and possibility of providing real offers for political change. The youngsters in politics provide no guarantees and indicators for being brewed with a more liberal mentality and for being more open and competitive than their mother parties, which in itself is an indicator of the level of internal democracy in a capillary level in the political parties.
27. Women forums in political parties have had no elections in the course of 2016 and have, therefore, organised no important national activities. They continue being led by politicians imposed by the party leadership and their functional model offers no different model from that of political parties. The quota system and commitment for growth of gender policies should be followed up by positive operational models and proper activities by the women forums.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Law “On political parties” should urgently be amended in several important points dealing with the obligation of political parties to annually deposit to the Court their factual status, management structures and data on their headquarters. The legal basis should lead to erasing of non-existent parties and create a more competitive and better space between the parties with real electoral support.
2. The Law “On political parties”, or the Electoral Code, should provide for the establishment of an office on the political parties to the CEC, with the basic function of monitoring the registration of political parties and of following-up with the implementation of the law by the political parties. The parties violating the law should be subject to public penalization, a practice that has not happened so far in Albania.
3. The Law “On political parties” and the Electoral Code should be amended on issues dealing with electoral financing and party funding, providing for mechanisms enabling transparency and democratic control of political party finance, as provided for in the Constitution. The parties should publish annual financial data on their official website, their donors and financial obligations, so that the concept of transparency is realistic and capable of being monitored.
4. Political parties should publish the exact number of their members every year, not only as an indicator of transparency, but also to enable accurate ratio between members and financial membership quotas collected by them annually.
5. Political parties should adopt the code of best practices and the highest standards of sister parties in the EPP/PES for regular publication of all party acts, programmes, statutes, regulations, dissenting opinions and decisions on any voting practice. Individual acts must not exceed or replace the importance of official acts, legitimately approved by the statutory structure and, therefore, by structures recognized by law.
6. Political parties should demonstrate clear willingness to give life to the internal structures of ethics, in accordance with the obligations arising from the legislation on decriminalization, create public addresses on meetings and decision-making and promote greater awareness among their members and structures in promoting values in the party. Individuals involved in scandals and subject to the de-criminalization law should be excluded from any representative political party structure.
7. Political parties must respect the labour code, the civil servants’ law, administration’s status, and other legal acts, which are related as much with the clear separation of party commitments as with the public civil status, and with the avoidance of conflicts of interest between members of their structure and their executive functions in the state.
8. Political parties should fill out in normal forms the historical and current data related to them, their structures, documents and party life, downloading them in the respective websites. They should turn their websites into models of transparency, for a better and more reliable relationship among the parties themselves, the public and voters.
9. Political parties should follow good practices of political and democratic training for their structures, especially for local youth structures, in order for them to be able to build successful political strategies, strengthen competition around ideas and projects and to precede voting measures with vision and clarity.

10. Political parties should commit to practical revival of judicial structures within them, to release members of these units from the conflict of interest, boost their integrity and ensure realistic circumstances for enabling negotiation of and dispute resolution functions for all disagreements in the party, amongst and between its membership and the party.
11. Political parties should ensure non-discriminatory conditions and circumstances to politicians and critical voices within them, considering criticism and different opinions as a wealth for the life of a political party and a catalyst and test for more internal democracy.
12. Political parties should create an internal monitoring structure for adherence to the statutory norms and, each year, should report to the decision-making structures (the Assembly/Council) on issues related to functioning of statutory documents and rules of procedure.
13. Political parties should be treated as public entities of public interest, in order for them to be subjected to public law, because of the importance they have for the political life of the country and due to the legal obligations stemming from the law on political parties. Any interested citizen should be allowed to communicate with the parties and take from them information of public, political and administrative interest, which do not constitute an internal problem to the parties themselves, nor infringe their electoral tactics.
14. Political parties should introduce some ethical acts that reject hate speech, denigration of critical thinking or the opinion of the Other, and should promote, through daily programs and activity, higher standards of democratic behaviour and civic culture.
15. Political parties should create a tolerant and competitive spirit with their partner organizations, youth organizations and women's forums; through separate funding and decision-making autonomy they need to leave ample space for partner organizations to exist, exercise their activity without direct intervention from above, and to promote values that are considered fragile in political parties in these organizations.
16. Political parties should annually publish brochures, reports, representative data, etc., on the activity, their identity and political position as a moral obligation to voters, citizens and the state, but also as a contribution and aid to the historical documents, to help researchers, media and students.

REPORT ON INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IN SP

Year 2016 marked important developments in the internal organization and democracy in the Socialist Party. Since 2013, when the SP came in power, up until 2016, it did not organise internal elections for its steering structures, nor did it embrace debates or handle issues of operation in decision-making. In 2016, the SP had to face both these aspects: namely, it had to face new elections for the steering local and central structures and internal debates, which peaked with the establishment of a new political fraction with two MPs, important people in the ranks of the SP.

DEBATE OVER THE SP CHAIRMAN MANDATE – REFERENDUM IN THE SP

In accordance with the decision of the National Assembly (2015), the SP Election Congress was set to be organised on 19th of March 2016. The decision on its postponement, and especially the decision to not include election of the SP Chairman with the principle “one member-one vote” in the points of order of the Congress caused criticism by some political exponents of the SP. Mr. Rama, the SP Chairman, was elected in this seat in September 2009 while his statutory mandate expired in September 2013. From that time onward, the SP sidelined the statutory obligation and the SP’s Chairman mandate was extended without a statutory decision-making up until March 2016, that is 3 years after the statutory mandate was due.

- The SP Congress, held on 19 March, was dominated by debates on statutory norms and party organization. A critical group within the SP parliamentary group and eight Assembly members, including the former Parliamentary Group head, Ben Blushi, the former President of the Republic, Rexhep Meidani, the former candidate for party chairman back in 2009, Maqo Lakrori, as well as other active politicians (Dade, Hafizi, etc.), or SP exponents now withdrawn from active politics (Legisi, Bello, Ago, etc.), supported the need for a return to the statutory path for the SP, called for new elections for the party chairman and a competitive contest for any party level. They drafted a public memorandum, continued with another official document noting all statutory violations and proposing in writing (according to the provisions of the Statute) changes in the points of order of the Congress. Their complaint was examined in the Statutory Guarantees’ Commission, but its requirements were dropped. After the Congress, the head of this Commission was named to a high official office, depending directly from the Prime Minister’s Office.
- Basically, none of the proposals and criticisms addressed by the critical minority within the PS was taken into consideration by the Chairman, the Party Chairmanship, the Assembly or the Congress. On the contrary, in local activities, especially in Elbasan, the major critical voice, Blushi, was publicly threatened by a group of party militants and the SP did neither declare a formal detachment nor a political distance from them. Smaller incidents happened in several other local branches.
- March of 2016 was associated with election practices in branches for appointing the delegates to the Congress. Despite of the fact that the statute provided for a unique practice, in practice there was a difference between practices and criteria applied. For example, in regions of Vlora, Gjirokastra, etc., incompatibility with two mandates was taken into consideration, considering at first the mandate of being a director or official in the local management levels. The SP was also involved in a public action to new admissions in the party, especially of young people aged 18-23. Consequently, a considerable

PARTIA SOCIALISTE E SHQIPËRISË
KOMISIONI I ZGJEDHJEVE I PARTISË

FLETË VOTIMI PËR REFERENDUMIN
9 PRILL 2016

Çështja që shtrohet për referendum:
Kur Partia Socialiste është në qeveri dhe Kryetari i saj është i zgjedhur Kryeministër

A konsiderohet i rinovuar automatikisht mandati i Kryetarit?

PO **JO**

☐ ☐

KOMISIONI I ZGJEDHJEVE I PARTISË TË NJA
NËNKRYETAR KRYETAR

part of the young delegates were young in age and fresh in experience. The ISP conducted a survey (questionnaire) with the PS Congress delegates, and drew interesting data from it, showing, on the one hand, the vertical nature of decision-making in the SP and, on the other hand, the desire of delegates for a more inclusive and more horizontal decision-making.

- On the occasion of the referendum, the SP officially announced that it counts 81 752 members, while in the 2014 and 2015 declaration to the CEC on sources of financing (membership quotas), it had declared a membership of 104-105 thousand individuals – that is about 23-24 thousand more than the membership referred to for party elections and representation in the Congress. The critical minority in the party, including two MPs, raising accusations on fraud and fictitiousness within the party, formally asked for the SP official membership lists and documents proving their voting, but their request was refused. The ISP formally monitored three voting processes for delegates and the SP referendum (counting those who entered the polling station on the election day) and concluded that the number of voters was significantly disproportionate (much lower) than the official figure announced by the party electoral authorities at the end of the process.
- The Congress, held on 19 March, decided for a party referendum, with the question: *“when the SP is in power and the SP chairman is the Prime Minister, is the Chairman mandate considered as automatically renewed?”* The Congress made important statutory changes, especially regarding its chairman’s mandate, correlating its longevity with the office of the Prime Minister, or emerging of the SP as the first party in the parliamentary elections. In this case too, the critical voices against the SP chairman and its official line issued a document with 20 reasons as to why the referendum should be boycotted, but the document was dismissed from the party steering structures.
- The Congress was featured by debates between the dominating majority in favour of the Chairman (Rama) and the minority in favour of his major critic (Blushi), and ended up in approval with votes in favour of political stances, proposals and other acts offered by the official SP line. Different from the other practices of normal Congresses (i.e. not in an election period), the 2016 SP Congress was dominated by the image and unification towards the political leader. The Congress was directly/indirectly attended by a considerable number of Western delegations, who provided their support messages.

PARTY ELECTIONS – VOTING WITH NO RIVAL CANDIDATES A DISTINCT FEATURE

Following the Congress, the SP continued with filling up of the central steering structures. The most important political figure, the Secretariat, was voted with no rival candidates, -- that is only with one name in the ballot paper. Such voting practice makes up for a negative development in the aspect of competitive democracy in the SP, and is an indicator of full control of Chairman Rama over the SP structures.

- The Assembly elected 7 secretaries as well (from 9 secretaries in 2009). Ruçi, Fino, Beqaj were reconfirmed in office, while Peza, Kokëdhima, Spiropali and Ulqini were elected anew. The SP decided to merge the election secretariat with the coordination secretariat into one structure, and the human resource secretariat with the coalition secretariat into one structure. The Business Secretariat was totally dissolved, while some other sectors were either re-divided or re-merged with one-another. Upon the new structure, the SP Secretariat is composed of the Secretary General, as well as the secretaries on administrative organization, digital organization, human resources and coalition relations, electoral coordination, youth, party programme and structural and migration reforms.
- The Congress voted the new National Assembly, with the division formula according to representation in the regions. The new Assembly was convened on 25 April 2016 and elected its chairmanship and secretariat. The meeting and voting was attended by 271 Assembly members. The Assembly was renovated with about 50%, but from those no longer in the party’s chairmanship, only two individuals (Besnik Bare and Eduard Shalsi) out of 11 were in competition. Nine chairmanship members did not run for another term (Ben Blushi, Mimoza Hafizi, Shkëlqim Cani, Arben Isaraj,

Ndre Legisi, Gentian Bejko, Luljeta Arapi, Arben Malaj), whereas two experienced figures in the SP, namely Namik Dokle and Arta Dade, resigned from their candidacy, the first on grounds of renovation, the second in a sign of non-satisfaction vis-à-vis election practices in the SP. Part of the voting process was also Olta Xhaçka, Chair of the SP's Women Organization, a seat which, as a rule, is automatically represented in the Assembly.

- Following the organization, in October, the PS appointed the political leaders of the regions: Tahiri (Tirana), Ruci (Fier), Balla (Elbasan), Dako (Durrës), Gjiknuri (Vlora), Peleshi (Korca), Bushati (Shkodër), Klos (Berat), Nicholas (Lezha), Kodheli (Debar), Çuçi (Gjirokastra) and Beqja (Kukes). They were assigned with no voting process, and contained some novel elements: the former MP, Koço Kokëdhima, left Vlora. At the recent PS Assembly he was elected Secretary for Migration and Structural Reform. Other movements in Durres, Berat, Vlore, etc., show of the change in preference at the top of SP in favour of the selected persons.
- In October, the SP did also announced its new organizational scheme, based on the new territorial division, and in view of the parliamentary elections of 2017. Under the scheme, besides coordinators in the regions, there will also be 61 coordinators at the municipal level, 90 coordinators at the ZECs, 386 coordinators at the level of local units within municipalities, and 5,300 coordinators on the basis of voting stations. Through these movements, the SP is the first political party taking up concrete organizational preparation efforts in launch of the 2017 parliamentary election campaign.

EVER GROWING VERTICAL DECISION-MAKING IN THE SP

Following the National Congress and the Referendum over the internal party election debate, the Socialist Party has not held any other national activities having an inherent organizational nature. During summer time, mainly due to justice reform and issues with the governing coalition, the new SP chairmanship has convened several times, much more that in the last couple of years taken together. One of the Assembly meetings was organised on 1 October, encouraged by a mass protest in Tirana against the return of law on waste imports.

- The SP Assembly of October 2016 approved several official organizational acts, which made up for a positive development in the documentary aspect and supplement the decision-making launched in March. Several new regulations were approved, such as the ones on the organization and operation of the SP National Assembly, the executive secretariat, the statutory guarantees and ethics commission, the head financial expert, financial experts and the financial supervisory council, the vote of confidence in the party, documentation in the party and its administration, manual on electoral organization, code of elections in the party, as well as the decision on the party membership quotas for 2016.
- In 2016, the new SP Chairmanship decided to open the election process for its chairmanship and party heads in all regions of the country. The electoral process was held on 27, 28, and 29 May, reflecting the new arrivals in the party and the trends of party renewal in quantitative and age terms, on the eve of upcoming parliamentary elections. In many branches there was only one candidate running for the seat, eliminating from above (the central leadership) other candidates, resulting in negative reaction (vote against) against the official candidate in the polls for the SP Chairman in places like Përmeti or Vau i Dejës¹. Imposition by the central leadership in the selection of candidates, promotion of new figures, especially of women/girls were distinct phenomena of the SP's local election process.

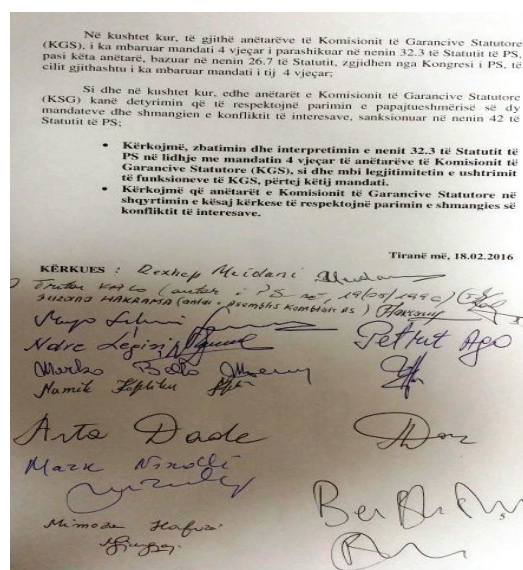
¹ In Përmet, 30 from the 54 Assembly members addressed the SP Chairmanship, asking for the green light for the three candidacies chosen on 13 May 2016 from the chairmanship of the Region of Gjirokastra to run for the seat of the regional party chairman. Their request was not considered. The chairmanship approved only one candidate, and this is why in the vote for the chairman, most of the voters (24 members) voted against and only 19 votes were casted in favour. In Vau i Dejës, the only candidate received 27 votes in favour and 30 against, while in areas like Malësia e Madhe, the only candidate received 99.7% of votes, in Delvina, Konispol, Finiq, Dropull, the official candidates got 100% of votes, with no vote against, in Elbasan, from 233 votes only 3 were casted against the candidate, etc.

- During the year, the SP announced new elections in some new branches and organizational adjustments in others, but there is still no concrete organizational plan, or act of realization of this political decision-making. Some peripheral acts were recorded mainly in areas where there was an internal party debate (especially in Shkodra and Vlora), but results enabling a more qualitative analysis are lacking.
- After the first phase (first months after the Congress) the Chairmanship organised no regular monthly meeting, but was instead convened only in cases of decision-making (organizational scheme), or due to issues related to the justice reform. Also, the SP Secretariat, an executive body with importance in the organizational structure of this party, convened no regular and public meetings. Moreover, in most of the meetings it held, there was regular attendance. One of the secretaries (K. Kokëdhima) did not participate in the periodic meetings of the Secretariat, mainly due to lack of invitation/ official notice, or because of his criticism against the political leadership of the SP.
- The SP holds regular parliamentary groups' meetings discussing over political stances of the week, and other operational problems. Over recent months, there have been several occasions when critical voices in the group have complained about pressure and rejection of their right to speech. However, parliamentary group meetings have played a crucial role in dispute resolution and in finding a political accord, particularly in voting of important laws requiring political decisions. In this regard, more impact is generated by the group meetings than the leadership meetings, a ratio running contrary to statutory provisions. It is to be noted that the SP follows its tradition – the group meetings are *de facto* run by the party Chairman, not the Parliamentary Group Chairman.
- During 2016 the SP did not manage to ensure elections and to establish regular functional centres for the partner organizations. The proposal of the SP Women Forum to increase the 2017 parliamentary representation quotas from 30 percent to 50 percent makes up for the only new development. In December, the SP Women's Forum became the first forum announcing voting through the one member – one vote principle. The process was not followed up by the media or follow-up groups therefore, the reference data are retrieved from the official data of the organization. According to it, elections were attended by 75% of its 30 thousand members, who confirmed its Chairwoman Xhacka in office for another mandate and elected the delegates for the National Convention.

DISCIPLINARY BALANCE AND IMPOSSIBILITY OF CRITICISIM IN THE SP

SP's statutory documents allow for criticism and offer guarantees for alternative views in all levels of decision-making. The practice of debates in the SP Congress (2016), despite decision-making, was in essence supportive of this argument. Critics against the official line of the SP leaders were not excluded, but as shown from the election for new steering bodies, they were left aside from candidacy and from chances to be elected.

- Former President Rexhep Mejdani, twice running for the seat of the SP Chairman and leader of the Council of the Wise in 2013, was totally sidelined from the SP, furthermore, several times he chose to distance himself from the party because of criticism against some decisions in the SP, or against some party executive officials. Based on the SP Statute, former Presidents remain permanent members of the Assembly, but Mejdani never took part in the Assembly, nor did the latter extend any invitation to him.
- During 2016, the most critical voices for the situation in the SP were MPs Ben Blushi and Mimoza



Hafizi. Particularly on the eve of the Congress and after it, their criticism became more systematic and direct. The SP refused the possibility of discussing their critical opinions in the party structures and to have them voted. On the contrary, in all the cases of declarations over such criticism, the SP leader and his close collaborators showed of disregard and denigrating marks against the critical MPs. They implied that they welcomed their parting from the SP.

- In November 2016, the two MPs announced their departure from the SP and the initiative to establish a new political party, LIBRA. The division was accompanied by bitter accusations between former colleagues and highlighted the fragility of the concept of internal democracy and the competition of ideas within political parties. In some cases, senior executives, who by law are not members of political parties and on the basis of the law would have to maintain a neutral stand, or, if involved in a political commitment, should resign from office, were expressed against the two MPs. Nothing happened, on the contrary, the degrading distancing from the two rebel MPs became a norm of communication in the SP, and, in turn, the critical rhetoric of two MPs against the SP reached its peak.
- Following the Constitutional Court Decision (of May 2016) on the removal of the mandate of the MP K. Kokëdhima, once the Secretary for Migration and Structural Reform at the SP, his relations with the SP have changed entirely. On the one hand, he was sidelined from political engagement, was not invited to the party meetings and activities (although there was never a formal decision against him and he continues to officially serve as the SP Secretary), whereas, on the other hand, Secretary Kokëdhima has publicly expressed criticism against various aspects of developments in the PS and its governance. In November he announced his initiative for a democratic movement within the PS, in order to enhance democracy within the party and promote the principle of selection of future candidates for MPs upon the system of primaries at the party base.
- In December 2016, the SP Assembly voted on the proposal to dismiss Mr. Kokëdhima from the office of the Secretary and announced his departure from the Assembly membership. The argument used to rational such decision was his critical rhetoric of the SP's official political line. The concept of "official line" is unclear for as long as there are no political views discussed and voted by the majority of the party. However, two significant details are featured: first, despite Kokëdhima himself resigning before the vote for his dismissal, the previously announced procedure of open voting on this matter was carried to an end; and second, following the election of the former MP in the Assembly there has been no critical act by the leadership or the statutory guarantees' structure in the SP, so there was no act of judgment, verification or decision-making proving inconsistency between his nomination and his parliamentary mandate. His sacking in December was made for demonstrative purposes, more than for reasons of principle. It was influenced by personal political issues between the Party Chairman and his critic and was aimed at serving as a warning to other potential critics in the party.
- After his dismissal, the former MP and former Secretary Kokëdhima warned of following the legal path regarding his mandate in the Assembly, thus potentially being the first case ever when an individual, part of a political party, seeks to appeal his rights through the court system. He has also continued with meetings with different groups on the grassroots, promoting the principle of direct democracy in decision-making in the Socialist Party.
- During the reporting period there have been other cases of non-institutional relations within the PS, especially in connection with the parliamentary group. For example, an MP, V. Kosta, announced his parting from the SP in the media in July and listed as grounds for leaving the SP a number of accusations of corruption and lack of the value system. In December of 2016, he continued being an SP group member, although insisting sharing public criticism time after time. Also, another MP, E. Ndocaj, announced creation of a new political party in November although he is an SP member. In 2013, he was one of the businessmen supporting the PS, in 2014 he became a harsh critic of the SP and its leaders, in 2015 received a parliamentary mandate because of the proportional mandate in his constituency, but constantly had disagreements with the local branch of the SP and, in some cases, even in compliance with the SP's political vote in Parliament.

- Also, in the context of decriminalization, the SP was affected by it twice during 2016, involving the MPs T. Doshi and A. Prenga. Up until December 2016 there was no court decision on guilt/acquittal for them, but in both cases the SP did publicly declare its political distancing from the two MPs. In fact, subsequent events showed that there was no official act of distance and the two MPs were active in the SP in all important decisions, especially in the political vote in Parliament. Officially they continue being part of the SP, having a significant impact on their electoral areas. As in these cases, even in other peripheral cases (such as the case of the former mayor of Dibër, or of a local leader in Saranda and Peqin, as well as some cases of local SP leaders), where SP officials have been involved in public scandals or criminal charges, no standard behaviour of decision-making is applied by the SP. The Mayor of Kavaja, who passed some months in house arrest and was latter dismissed from the Council of Ministers upon the request of the Prosecution Office and of the CEC, is still officially a steering figure in the SP and no disciplinary measure is taken against him. In this case, or in cases of some other leaders, the SP has shown that it has failed to distance itself publically, but has also supported them through party and state structures. Such acts run contrary to the spirit of the law on decriminalization and to a number of ethical regulations approved by the SP.

IPD in the SP, CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES FOR 2017

During transition, the SP has appeared as one of the parties with the biggest internal democracy, with competitive voting, with internal debates and with liberal behaviours vis-à-vis critical groups. In the last 5-7 years, also thanks to the closed-list election system and the constitutional power of the Prime Minister, the SP is self-displaced towards a traditional party with an emphasis on the organizational pyramid. None of its statutory acts, regulations, internal voting, critical proposals, or political debates can be found in its official website, or in the public memory of this party, at least over the last 3-4 years.

- The 2016 referendum just strengthened the pyramidal nature of its leadership, while establishment of a new party by the two MPs served as an additional testimony of the trend of absence of internal democracy in this party. Currently, the SP houses two operational systems – one liberal system of stances and thoughts, different from many other political parties, and one arrogant and refusing system for the critics, and claims for violation of internal rules of political decision-making.
- The two systems overlap and are used depending on the needs of the political leadership, therefore, in essence there are no guarantees for better standards of organization and operation. For example, there are requests for verification of voting, for the membership or decision-making list, which is good, but any of them has been rejected with arrogance, which, on its end, is significantly negative. The statutory structure that should be the guarantor of the process, namely the Commission of Statutory Guarantees, is not functional, has ended its mandate term and is compromised because of the appointments of its members in positions of dependency by the Party Chairman, who is the Prime Minister at the same time.
- During 2017, this trend is expected to expand even more. If the SP fails to administer critical voices within itself and to offer statutory solutions for voting and any reasonable proposal, it risks being affected by other departures, thus becoming prone of a much more pyramidal shape structure in the June 2017 elections. Known names in its history, currently in Parliament and in the PS, will have minimal chances to remain part of the list running in the elections, while the left spectrum and other parties, including the EAP, are attracting former representative names of the SP who are critical of the current SP's official line.
- In essence, the PS remains a new model party, an electoral party organized only for campaign periods. It remains a political group around a program/offer, around its political leader, with dysfunctional internal democracy and a decision-making structure away from the model of parties with an institutional nature.

REPORT ON INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IN DP

During 2016 the Democratic Party (DP) has not gone through any important electoral processes in its senior management structure. The most important development in the DP's organizational aspect was its internal election process, in the context of its re-structuring.

- During 2016, the DP organised a National Assembly (in a non-statutory period), has called no meetings of its National Council (which should have convened at least once), has organised no regular meetings of its chairmanship (only two meetings are convened). The statutory obligations are not met within concrete deadlines and terms, nor in the manner of operation of its chairmanship, while there have been constant changes, changes in departments, or in the progress of the election processes in some branches and partner organizations, like the LDG and the FRPD.
- Parallel structures, the chairmanship, departments, coordinators, have not managed to operate in a statutory format, with regular periodic meetings and with transparent acts. Such practice has been positive in the qualitative aspect of the engaged persons, and negative in the qualitative aspect of the institutional opposition.
- From the start of 2016, the DP has re-distributed the commitments of its steering figures in districts. More specifically, Ristani in Shkodër, Noka in Vlorë, Gjani in Lezhë, Paloka in Tiranë, Imami in Durrës, Shehu in Kukës, Strazimiri in Dibër, Pollo in Fier, Spaho in Elbasan, Ruli in Korçë, Bode in Berat, Shehu in Gjirokastrë, etc. Most of the leaders were named as party regional heads for the first time, some critical voices were sidelined from leading the regions and the process found no wide support in the respective branches. On the contrary, there was a number of incidents and accusations dominating this phase, which in itself led to another decision on the re-organization of most of the local structures.

RI-ORGANIZATION IN 35 BRANCHES, MISSION IMPOSSIBLE?

- The Democratic Party, upon the decision of its Chairmanship (of 28 April, 2016) and order of its Chairman (of 29 April 2016), launched a campaign for the reorganization and completion of structures of the party branches, group of sections and sections. Deadline for application of this Decision was 30 June 2016. The decision was justified by the need for *“organizational adaptation of PD in central levels with the new realities and the need to energize the DP's activity in face of future challenges.”* Leaders of local DP branches were elected in 2014 and their statutory mandate is 4 years (up until 2018), however, the decision of the DP Chairmanship (of April 2016) led to the termination of the mandate for more than a third of branch managers. More specifically, a decision was taken for adding up 14 new branches, increasing the number of branches to 67. Adding up of party branches brought changes to 35 branches and led to a growing number of co-opted members in the National Council. The 35 branches where new elections are to be held include also branches where positive outcomes were recorded in the last local elections (for instance, Pogradec), and a number of local branches where the outcomes were negative.
- The decision generated critical feedback from a number of branches, which went to new elections. According to the Statute (Article 4), the DP is organised on the “basis of the territorial division of the country” and, with the decision of its leadership, only organizational structures, based on socio-professional grounds, can be established. In the case in question, such divisions, for instance, two branches in Durres municipality, constitute a deviation from the statutory provisions. Because of this, the Head of Pogradec, the Head of Branch No. 3 in Tirana and some other local leaders presented their resignation publicly in a sign of protest against this decision. Most branches undergoing reorganization, as well as some members of the Democratic Party, especially the party heads of the branches of Vlora, Durres, Malësi e Madhe, Pogradec, Dibra, etc., have criticized the decision, stating that it is non-statutory², and that the competence

² Some chairmen of local branches did publically react against the Chairmanship decision. Citing one of them (M. M. PD of Vlora “the decision of the DP Chairmanship is anti-statutory. The criteria have not been applied, there are no standards in place, the decision is not grounded, not consulted with the branch, moreover it seems like a collective sentence with no trial for all the democrats in the branches defined and included in the re-organization”. There was a public critical reaction even by the Chairman of the Branch of Durrës, Pogradec, Malësi e Madhe, Peshkopi, of Municipal Unit No. 3 in Tirana, etc., two of whom resigned in sign of protest. The critics against the Chairmanship decision declared their concern publically, as they were not given the possibility to have an official meeting with the DP Chairman to discuss over the issues and resolve disagreements.

of this decision belongs to the National Council. The project was based on the new territorial division and the need to adjust local organization with the new administrative boundaries. Some deviations were made in relation to the territorial division, mainly for internal organization needs, especially in suburban cities in the south and in the north.

- At the end of the deadline, the monitoring exercise found that regular elections were conducted only in 1/3 of the scheduled branches. In the remainder of two-thirds of branches, elections were postponed, while in the 1/3 of branches they were not held at all (as of December 2016). In some of the latter cases the practice of appointing local leaders (for example in Durrës) is being applied until a second decision. After about 7 months with no leadership, the DP Party Chairman of the branches of Vlora and Pogradec were elected, while there is not yet final decision-making in some other important branches, such as in Tirana, Dibra etc. Tirana remains without a unique management structure, different from the principle of branches by municipalities, and unlike all other competitive political parties.
- During the election process in the party (branches in elections), many organizational and technical issues were found, such as discrepancy between expectations from the centre and the response from the party grassroots, escape to other political parties, and often degradation of internal debate in quarrels, splits into groups and public charges in the media. Amongst the incidents recorded was the case of a DP regional chairman moving to another political party in sign of protest, complete withdrawal from politics, or public statement of criticism against the political decisions of the DP. The recent case of elections in Dibër, where the DP entered elections without a legitimate local branch chairmanship or chairman (because the old structure was fired in April), shows of an abnormal organization, and as seen in practice, having an inherent potential for crisis and internal divisions.
- Lack of elections and their first postponement for September, then to another phase (without a formal written act for pushing the process from the leadership), disabled regular meeting of the National Council, a structure, which according to the DP statute, should be consulted on important policy decisions between the two Assemblies. In November the DP convened its first meeting of the chairmen of branches, including the elected and appointed chairmen, with the aim of extending its membership and preparing for the 2017 political actions and the upcoming parliamentary elections.

VERTICAL DECISION-MAKING, A DISTINCT FEATURE IN THE DP

- In November, the DP Chairman launched his initiative to open the party to new feeds, mainly individuals who are marginalized, excluded or criticized by traditional local and central structures, and pledged for application of the membership vote in the selection of candidates for MPs in 2017. Up until January, the opening process has not yet yielded concrete results, mainly due to the closed organizational nature of structures currently dominating the central and local DP structures. If his promise regarding the MPs is realized, this will be the first time ever using the primary system in a political party. The fact that the DP has no solid local structures and has no national membership register speaks of impossibility of votes in the grassroots, however, the Spring of 2017 will be the first test of this promise.
- During the judicial reform process (July 2016), the DP did not convene the Council nor the Chairmanship, and most decisions were taken either through parliamentary group meetings, a structure which is not vested with this right in the provisions of the Statute, but remains the most important political and executive body in the DP. In its weekly activity the DP has given priority to regular meetings of the parliamentary group, which according to the Statute, cannot be decision-making regarding identity and in-principle party policies, but is just an implementation instance. Some of the MPs who are members of the group are not experienced party figures, not having a relevant previous career in politics. The practice of strengthening the Group meeting remains a trend for the Albanian parties, including the DP, regardless of the fact that the party chairman is not an MP and that the group meetings are almost never chaired by the chairman of the parliamentary group.

- The Democratic Party Chairman has proposed a 35% youth quota for the upcoming election list for the Chairmanship. The concept of the youth quota percentage is related to the tendency of reformation and change of the age group of the parliamentary representatives, but is faced with criticism and dissatisfaction from the traditional part of the party, some of whom have expressed public criticism and are not supportive of predetermined quotas.
- The DP Chairmanship decided also (on 28 April) to establish its branch in London (United Kingdom), in the context of expansion of its branches abroad. The London-based Branch marks the first time ever when a political party establishes a representative political structure in the UK. Earlier, the SP, DP, LSI, and other parties have established branches of their respective parties in Greece, Italy, Germany, and other countries. According to Article 37, paragraph 2 (c), the National Council has the authority to take all necessary measures for the implementation of the Statute and the progress of the party. Appointment of a new branch or complete re-organization of the structure of branches is the responsibility of the National Council, not of the leadership in the Democratic Party.
- According to Article 37, paragraph 2 (b/v) the National Council elects by secret ballot the heads of departments. According to Article 43/1 of the DP Statute, the heads of departments “are chosen upon the proposal of the Chairman by the National Council.” However, contrary to this rule, at its meeting in April 2016, the Democratic Party Chairmanship decided to appoint six (6) new managers in charge of departments³. Their appointment was made without competition and by secret ballot. The same practice was applied before for additions of new members in the Chairmanship, including three new municipal mayors, FLD Board Chairman and the Chairman of the Committee on Ethics and Integrity. Later, two other members were appointed through direct appointment, increasing the number of members of the party chairmanship. According to Article 39, paragraph 3, the heads of departments are automatically members of the Democratic Party Chairmanship, therefore, adding up members of the Party Chairmanship by the Chairmanship itself, without a statutory vote of the National Council undermines the principle of election and separation/balance of powers amongst the decision-making structures.
- Group debates are constantly characterised of parliamentary critical voices against the official political line of the DP Chairman, including tracking of non-statutory decision-making practices (Salam, Topalli, Bregu, Patozi etc.). Their criticisms are generally not considered, neither are they voted. On the contrary, internal debates and critical voices in the group in favour of the vote for the justice reform triggered warnings for exemptions from the party, a move which was also not statutory. MPs questioning the official line of the DP in the second levels of decision-making were faced with public threats to non-candidacy in the next elections. They were subjected to denigrating attacks in the media and social networks, there was no internal debate over their amelioration theses and proposals and, since then, they have not yet been invited to any of the political party activities. At the end of the process, no one was excluded from the party, but there was a significant sign of the great need for the party to open itself up to critical and liberal thinking amidst its ranks. There are currently no functional mechanisms in the party guaranteeing handling of claims and settlement of disputes. The Central Appeals Committee and other structures still remain non-operational.
- In the two partial elections, those in Dibër and in Kolonjë, the DP applied the classical form of imposing its candidacy from the party headquarters, who was different from the proposal from the party grassroots and of the party local branch. In the case of Dibër, the DP named an MP, a central political figure, refusing the list of candidates coming from the local party branch, leading to reaction from the party grassroots, including the local chairman in office. In Kolonja there was no reaction mainly due to minimum chances to win the elections, but the decision for passing the candidacy to a third political party did not go through decision-making of the local or central chairmanship.

³ E. Alibeaj was named the chair of the Security and Public Order Department, A. Turku, Chairman of the Local Government Department, G. Malko Chairman of the Property Department, T. Alizotaj Chairman of the Politically Persecuted Department, E. Çeno Chairman of the Human Rights Department, and E. Salianji Secretary of the Civic Action.

- In the criteria for party branches' elections and for other decision-making structures the DP has included even obligations deriving from the de-criminalization law. In service of reaching this aim, the DP was the first to establish a special investigation structure, the Ethics and Integration Committee. Although a positive new development, this Committee has never convened, has no functional structure, has no regulation and, as a consequence, no other operational mechanism for the examination of candidates to be named as chairmen of the 35 branches. Also, it was not involved in the examination procedure of new co-optations at the Chairmanship and at the level of heads of departments.
- In November 2016, at a Parliament session dedicated to voting of one of the laws related to the reform in the judiciary, the DP parliamentary group boycotted the session. One of its MPs, M. Fufi, remained in the session and voted in support of the Law. The next day, the DP publically notified his expulsion from the parliamentary group and, consequently, from the DP. The MP reported that he has taken no formal notice and that there have been no meeting of any structure for such decision. In a matter of fact, there was no group meeting, no voting and no decision-making from the chairmanship. Expulsion of Fufi is a unique case in this legislature and an expected act in the context of DP's commitments for ethical standards and the de-criminalization process, but the form, pretext and moment found for the expulsion put to the fore the non-institutional and non-transparent nature of decision-making in the DP.
- In December, the CEC, upon the request of the Prosecution Office, lifted the mandate of the MP D. Tahiri, member of the DP Parliamentary Group. The decision was part of three similar acts affecting three main political parties in Albania. As in the case of the other two parties, even in the DP, lifting of the mandate was not accompanied by party distancing as a political measure, suspension of local functions or of his membership in the parliamentary group. Officially the DP took no stance, while its representatives in the CEC voted against lifting of his mandate.

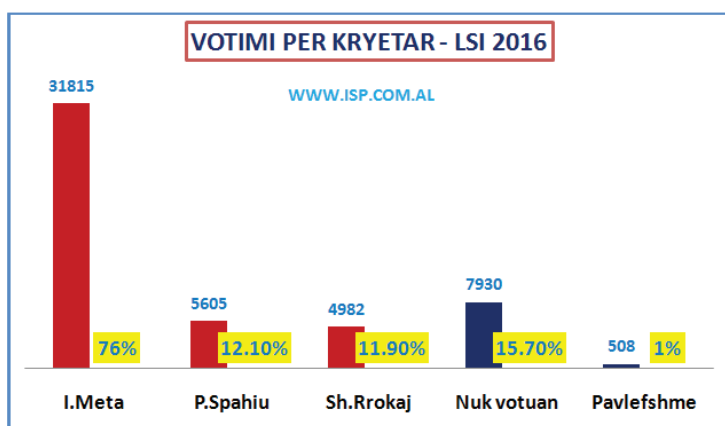
IPD IN DP, CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES FOR 2017

- The DP has announced significant structural changes ahead of the next parliamentary elections. It aims to repeat KOP's practice, a structure created with external feeds from civil society, established back in 2005. To achieve this, the DP needs a huge change in its image, composition, political direction and its political behaviour - a mission almost impossible in such a short time.
- The DP's decision-making structures are not expected to be operational even in the coming months. Their convening brings more criticism on the party inactiveness to date and recycles old political figures at the grassroots and in the centre, therefore the new managing staff in the DP does not prefer to act via classical structures. They rely on departments and coordinators, appointed by the Chairman and making up for the circuit of close associates.
- At the beginning of 2017, a serious hurdle shall be the manner in which the DP will withstand its internal debates in the Parliamentary Group and the main local branches. All local/branch party chairmen claim candidacy to run in multi-name lists for MPs, a demand which means displacement from the list of many of the current representative figures, who also have clear ambitions to run for the upcoming Parliamentary elections.
- The guarantee structures, such as the Disciplinary Committee, Ethics Committees, and others have not yet convened any meeting and are not expected to have any such meetings in the period remaining until the election. In any analysis, the rush for statutory correctness in the DP is considered excessive in face of its needs for permanent political action and response to different political initiatives coming from the Government.
- The pledge of DP's Chairman for openness of the party, new feeds, competition and election of new parliamentary representational bodies through party grass root voting, makes up for a major challenge in the internal party democracy aspect. Another aspect remaining a test for its organization and reaction power is the capacity to establish the widest and most efficient coalition possible, including other parties of the same political spectrum and civil groups.

■ IPD IN THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT FOR INTEGRATION (SMI)

The Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) has held elections for its Chairman and for a number of secondary structures during 2016. However, the SMI has had no important ventures of its internal democracy. Operating as a party with a limited base of representation and with its founding leader on top, expectations for intensive internal developments remain unrealistic.

- In November 2016, the LSI held its routine elections for the position of its Chairman. The last elections were held in 2012, so, according to the Statute, the next elections would be held after 4 years. In view of these elections, the LSI tried to develop more an awareness campaign rather than a competition within the party. For about 30 days, the LSI presented three candidates for chairman, respectively the party founder, Ilir Meta, former Rector, Shezai Rokaj and the MP, Përparim Spahiu. The three candidates held some local activities, in most cases with joint appearance before the party membership and with formal differences in their platforms. The two running candidates expressed no objections challenging Chairman Meta, hence more than a race for party's chairmanship, the voting process in the SMI was a test for the mobilization and identification of structures in the eve of parliamentary elections of 2017.
- According to official sources, 84.23% of the SMI's voting members participated in the elections, and around 7930 declined to do so. In 2012, the LSI claimed 31,000 members, while in 2016 it declared 50,300 members. Out of the three candidates Meta was reconfirmed with 76% of votes, or by 31,815 votes. The second candidate in the list was Spahiu with 5605 votes, or 12.1% of votes, and last was listed Rrokaj with 4982 votes, or 11.9% of the votes. Regional data show that the lowest percentage of participation was in Elbasan (70%) and Lezha (77%), whereas the highest was in Fier (89%) and in Berat, Tirana and Shkodra (88%). The high attendance figures were not verified by other sources, because the process was not externally monitored, nor was it regularly covered by the media. However, the SMI is known for its capillary organization and solid structure, with a free move depending on the political orientation of the central structure.



- Several incidents were reported during SMI's election process, which did not become subjects of debates, nor were mentioned in the speeches/presentations by the candidates. The most notorious case was the collective resignation of the overwhelming structural part of the SMI Chairmanship in Vlora, and its displacement to the SP. Such movements were present even in some other peripheral branches, as there were new feeds as well, mainly from former DP members, or its allied parties.
- Of the three candidates in the elections, MP Spahiu marked an interesting development in service of internal democracy. In June 2016 he was suspended from the Parliamentary Group, initially with a decision by the group and latter by the chairmanship because of a critical note in his social networks in relation to the justice reform. According to the statutory documents of the SMI, suspension/expulsion occurs when there is a political vote against, not when a vote against is warned, that is not before the political act happens. On July 22, Spahiu voted for the reform, so the suspension was cancelled and a month later he decided to run for the SMI's Chairman

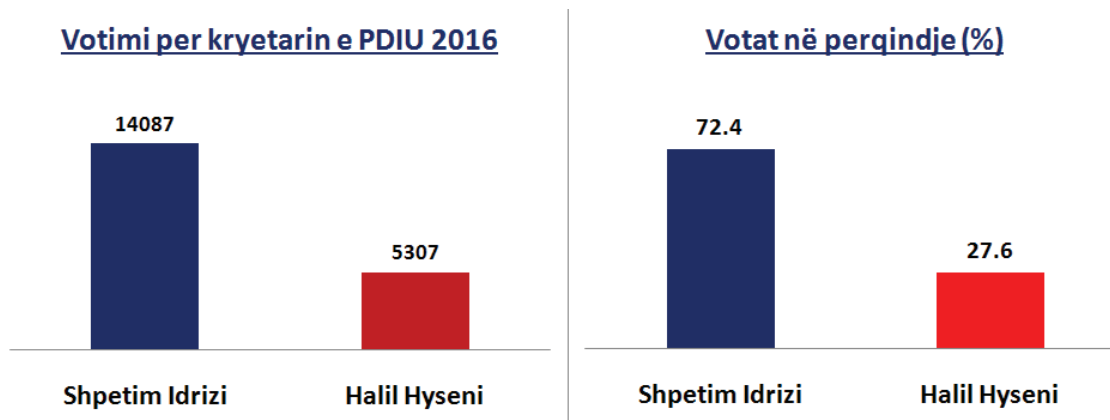
seat. The practice of suspension and afterwards of the cancellation of suspension, rather than the product of an orderly analysis and regular statutory treatment in the SMI, was a political move to attract attention. Also, the change in Vlora branch and the appointment of the branch Chairman from Tirana was not made through an institutional decision by the Chairmanship, but mainly through vertical lines in the party.

- The SMI held in December a meeting of its Steering Committee for electing its steering team. The Chairmanship declared one candidate for each seat, but there were self-proclaimed candidacies for some functions as well. They were mostly acts of a formal nature, rather than real competitions. The SMI elected its Vice Chairman (P.Vasili), Vice Chairmen (L. Rama and K. Mehmetaj), Secretary General (E. Brahimllari), Chairman of the CDC (Sh.Rrojka), as well as its secretaries (Xhixho, Bixha, Haxhinasto and Shaqiri). A new development of these elections was promotion of youth in the senior political positions (Brahimllari, Mehmetaj and Bixha), and naming as one of the party secretaries one of the most long-lived leaders of the Albanian intelligence service.
- The SMI also chose its delegates for the National Convention, and is expected to soon end the electoral process at all levels of management. It is worth mentioning that the MSI made some changes in the cabinet, including the replacement of two of its ministers - a mainly vertical decision, not involving decision-making by relevant political structures.
- In early March, the SMI announced the launch a campaign at local level so as to re-organize its branches in accordance with the new administrative division and to update its party membership. It reported that, at the beginning of March, before launching its reform in branches, it counted 40 thousand members from 50 thousand counted at the end of this process. Such considerable growth for a small political party is mainly explained by the high rate of representation in the administrative and executive levels and the interest of the officials involved in these institutions to get political support from the SMI.
- Although the statutory definition of SMI requires regular periodic meetings of the Steering Committee, etc., in its official website, the last notification for a Steering Committee meeting is dated on 23/11/2015 – that is about a year ago. Also, the chairmanship meetings are not regular and the practice of consultations of the parliamentary group are dominant over the other decision-making structures, although the Statute speaks of the reverse hierarchy. Official data published online show that the SMI has not even published the names of the SC members, coordinators and official data related to the branches, the structures of youth and women, as well as acts of political decision-making.
- The MSI was the first party announcing its financial expenditures online. Several similar reports are found in its official website. The practice followed by it constitutes a positive new development, however, it is still a non-sufficient measure to demonstrate real transparency and honesty in the statements and sources of funding. A part of financial bills are declared as voluntary contributions, while only a small portion of its activities are included in the online declarations.
- From the documentary point of view, the SMI has had no changes in the programme or structure, no Statute changes or new regulations approval. Changes have occurred in the organizational operational terms, mainly for greater compliance with the new territorial division and electoral expectations of 2017. Most of its policy documents online in the official website belong to early times (more than two years ago), and there have been no concrete efforts from it for more transparency in activities of its structures, their composition and decision-making.

■ IPD IN JUSTICE, INTEGRATION AND UNITY PARTY (JIUP)

The JIUP is the fourth most important party in the current Parliament. It has come through difficulties in its political orientation, mainly due to the fact that in the 2013 elections it was part of the right-wing coalition, while it is currently part of the governing left-wing coalition.

- Due to the change of political position, the JIUP has had internal debates and departures of MPs as well. More specifically, Vlora MP, Dashamir Tahiri, is not part of the JIUP parliamentary group, or of its leadership. He has identified himself with the DP, their traditional ally, and is expected to run in 2017 for one of its allied parties. However, the JIUP has managed to maintain parliamentary representation even due to joining of the group by the DP's MP, Mesila Doda.
- One of the main features of the small political parties in Parliament is the attempt to create a parliamentary group and get the support of the major parties for this purpose. Because a parliamentary group needs 7 members, the JIUP did formally borrow from the SP at least 3 MPs, namely: A. Xhindi, B. Derveni and G. Rehovica. There is no political decision of the SP leadership over the formal transfer of its three MPs to the JIUP, nor is there a political decision of JIUP for their acceptance, as there is no single case when the eight MPs (5 of the JIUP and 3 of the SP) are assembled as a parliamentary group to debate or take a decision.
- The most important development for the JIUP was organization of elections for its chairman. The elections were held according to the principle "one member - one vote" on 21 May, 2016, a new development for the Albanian small political parties. Part of the formal contest was the then Chairman Shpërtim Idrizi, and a formal rival, Halil Hyseni. According to an official notice from the party, on May 21, there was a vote in total by 19 634 individuals, or 81.5 percent of the 24 thousand members. In conclusion, Idrizi was reconfirmed as the Party Chairman with 14087 votes, or 72.6% of the votes, while the formal candidate Hyseni received 5367 votes, or 27.6 percent of valid votes. The Chairman has a mandate of 4 years (2016-2020). In the same day, the JIUP also held elections for the branch chairmanships, chairmen and delegates. There were no notifications of irregularities and complaints, but there were no monitoring mechanisms on standards and accuracy of the voting process and voting management.



- The JIUP strengthened its political positioning in 2016 by taking over the seat of the Deputy Speaker of Parliament and the positive outcome of this party and of the coalition in the elections for the Municipality of Dibra. Its commitment in the coalition was widely seen as an SP effort to balance its strategic partnership with the SMI. However, even though the JIUP played an active role in Dibrë, the main leaders of this party were not part of the electoral campaign there. This situation was mostly due to the fact that more than the party logo, local success is dedicated to the personal campaign of individuals using/representing the JIUP logo.
- In October 2016, JIUP notified complementary elections in its steering team. Mesila Doda, a former MP, with two mandates with the DP, was voted with consensus as the party's Secretary General. The same voting practice with no rival candidacies was used even for the election of

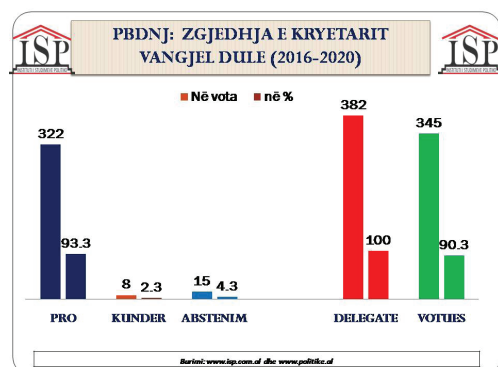
the two Deputy Chairmen, Halil Hyseni and Abaz Hado, and for the election of the secretariat, composed of the organizational secretariat Alfred Deshati, Secretary for Election Issues Erion Manohasa and Secretary for Partner Organizations Alda Hasani.

- A positive development of JIUP is the fact that this party has now established a website, with data on its programme and its political stances. Its website is at: <http://pdiu.al/faqa/>. The site lacks important data, such as the Statute, data on its chairmanship, party steering structures, funding, etc. However, in the context of transparency, this remains a positive development and a reflection on the criticism raised in the preliminary ISP reports on the public transparency of JIUP in particular, and of all the political parties in general.

■ IPD IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY (RP)

The Republican Party is one of the small parliamentary parties having more meetings and institutional activity.

- It has called at least three meetings of the National Assembly in 2016, as well as several other meetings of its Chairmanship, with local leaders, youth, women, etc., a record which is hard to find in most of the small parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties. During 2016, the RP ran no electoral process for the Party Chairman and no National Congress.
- One of the critical developments in the RP is the contraction of its parliamentary group from 2013. In 2013 the RP won four MPs, one through the multi-name list of the DP and three in its voting within the right-wing coalition. Immediately after the elections, one of the MPs (L. Luzha) moved to the SMI. Later on, another Republican MP, (Y. Shehu) passed to the SMI too. In 2016, a third MP, (A. Duka) had disagreements related to the management of the RP and left the party for becoming the Chairman of another political party, the Agrarian Environmentalist Party. In any case departures and movements from the party were made outside the structures and best practices of the debate, largely based on personal agendas.
- In 2016 the RP tried to complete its steering staff offering new figures. It has currently named as its Organizational Secretary Albano Zhapaj, as its Deputy Chairwomen Brunilda Laboviti, as Secretaries Edmond Nushi and Ingrid Mingomataj, and as Deputy Chairwoman in the Assembly Teuta Kodra. The data were made known to the public only via the party's new website (<http://prsh.al/>). The website contains data as well on the political program and the main activities of the party. It does, however, not contain data on the statute, the chairmanship, other supporting structures, but having a website, and the efforts to update it with qualitative data is a positive development in service of transparency.



■ IPD IN THE UNITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PARTY (UHRP)

The UHRP has not had important developments during 2016.

- In July, the vote of re-confirmation of Chairman Vangjel Dule in office for another mandate was formal, with no rival candidates. The most important issue of the Congress was related to the political standing of this party, which in 2016 passed from the being part of the ruling majority to

opposition. The Congress did as well approve the draft of the new political programme of UHRP, statutory amendments and decided for complementary elections for its steering structures. Most of these data cannot be traced in the official website of UHRP (<http://al.pbdnj.com/>), which does, at any case, contain the political standing of UHRP, some organizational notifications, and

particularly the parliamentary activity of the only MP of this party, V. Dule.

- The UHRP completed its steering team on 3 December. The General Steering Council elected the new party chairmanship, regional coordinators, as well as the political support team of the Chairman. More specifically, Jorgo Xomaka, Garufo Noti and Gjovalin Valca were elected as Vice Chairmen with no alternative candidates. The voting data and composition of the Chairmanship are not yet made public.
- Despite of the fact that for a small party like the UHRP the internal party developments have almost never been subjected to public debate, it should be noted that in the latest Congress, one of the Chairmen (TH. P) resigned because of other preferences on UHRP's positioning with political coalitions. In some branches of the country, particularly in the south, there have been rivalries, criticism, claims and debates even in the media regarding the steering policies of UHRP and issues of interest in local representation, but in a statutory and organizational line, Chairman Dule has dominated the party and there have been no visible fractions or issues.

■ IPD IN SMALL PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES

The other parliamentary parties (DNFP), or those having an indirect representation in Parliament, such as the EAP, PAA, NDP, CDP, and others (due the mandates won in the DP's multi-name lists), have had no important developments, or events with a public interest in the course of last year.

- At the end of 2015, the DNFP did officially change its Chairman and MP, by opting to leave the party leadership in the hands of the lawyer Dhimtër Muslia, former chairman of the party back in 2013. At the beginning of 2016, the CDP and the DNFP agreed on a merger between them, but the process did not see any end. The DNFP has a functional chairmanship, has convened a National Meeting, has made some changes in its management staff, all of these efforts aimed at playing a more active role in the country's political life. The DCP (<http://www.pdk.al/>) for its part, has not held any electoral Assemblies in years. It did not organise any national meeting in 2016 either. Its decision-making is primarily based on the decisions of the chairmanship, or of its managerial staff.
- The MND maintains same qualities, with the difference that the MND (<http://lzhk.al/>) has no data proving the existence of selected structures at the central or local government level, nor meetings of an organizational or decision-making character.
- In March 2016 the former SP Minister, Agron Duka, later a DP MP, was elected the Chairman of the Agrarian Environmentalist Party (AEP). Despite the election being part of personal agreements between politicians and symbolic parties, his parting for the agrarian/environmentalist political party was natural and had a public impact. The AEP did soon completely change its political and organizational structures, offered left-wing and right-wing politics, adopted a program and a statute, and held various national and local activities. In October 2016, the AEP convened its National Convention, the largest event held by any of the small political parties in Albania.
- In November, the AEP benefitted from the support given by the DP in the framework of a coalition to run in Kolonja with its candidate for Mayor. The local campaign, although at the end not successful, was an important test for this party and served as an indicator of its growing strength. The AEP is expected to have a competitive role in the elections of 2017 for the seat of the fourth political class in the country and is expected to be represented in Parliament after the elections, despite of which party wins the elections.
- Different from the other small parties, the AEP has an active website containing data on the party, the programme, departments, local leaders, etc. The data are not complete (there are no complete data for the steering staff and the local structures, data on party financing, or its Statute), but given that it has become operational only a couple of months ago, it shows a positive trend vis-à-vis legal obligation and public transparency.

■ IPD IN NEW POLITICAL PARTIES

Two new political parties were established during 2016, THE CHALLENGE FOR ALBANIA, chaired by the former independent candidate for mayor for Tirana (2015) Gjergj Bojaxhiu and LIBRA, chaired by the two former SP MPs, Ben Blushi and Mimoza Hafizi.

- SFIDA (The Challenge) was proclaimed in October, whereas LIBTA in November of 2016. The two new parties share same features: they are open parties, promise decision-making from their membership and massive use of direct communications with their members (and via social networks), have a collective chairmanship and steering structure and criticise the organizational and functional models of big parties, particularly of the SP and the DP.
- The two parties have their respective websites containing party programmes and statutes, provide data on their daily activity and keep political stances on current developments. LIBRA tried to organise an online voting for the state budget and its initiative for direct elections for the President, which are both novelties, but failed to have an impact in the political decision-making in the country.
- None of the two parties has yet organised any national election. They are currently in the phase of being extended in the districts. One needs to wait for their behaviour vis-à-vis the internal election processes and political decision-making in the 2017 elections to judge on the compatibility between concrete acts and statutory norms, as well as the level of internal party democracy.
- One of the two parties, LIBRA (<http://libra.al>) is more active in organization, with public presentations and public declarations, this even because of the fact that the two founding MPs are present with their political debates almost in every plenary session at the Parliament.

■ IPD IN FRESH: NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

FRESH (the Euro-Socialists Youth Forum) is the largest political organization of the left-wing young Albanian. Because of its background and active management by renowned people, who over the years have become main leading politicians in the country, there has been an active debate on party functioning and representation within FRESH. In 2016, like in 2012, FRESH organized a national debate and vote on the election of its new leaders, based on the principle of primary voting through its membership. Unlike 2012, in these elections FRESH experimented with the online voting of its members and various supporters.

- Notification of the elections and organization of debates was not based on the Statute of FRESH, but was instead imposed from above, by the SP Chairman and Secretariat. The still in office FRESH's Chairwoman Joleza Koka, accepted the practice even due to a critical public debate caused by some of her statements. The Socialist Party Chairman announced the establishment of an evaluation group for the debate and the elections in districts, a process called "FRESH VOICE", attended also by the member of the SP's Chairmanship P. Majko, SP's Youth Secretary, E. Spiropali, as well as two non-political figures, the publisher of "Kurban" and an actor of "Portokalli" humorous TV show. The fact that in the jury the political and non-political votes had the same weight indicates that the process was more targeted at public image and marketing rather than at ideas and debates on political platforms.
- The process was innovative as any individual in FRESH was free to run and about 280 of them embarked on an electronic voting process. According to official data, electronic voting was used by 110,675 people, about 5-6 times more than the official membership of FRESH, an indication of the massiveness, but also of fictitiousness of the electronic voting system and administration. Voting identified 20 candidates with the most votes, of which the PS leadership will have to choose the names to be voted by the membership for the new leader of FRESH.
- FRESH counted about 40 thousand members, but the one member – one vote voting in October

2016 was attended by 24,851 members. The elections were won by the former Secretary General Eljo Hyska with about 10 thousand votes, followed by Shpend Kolgega with 7.7 thousand. The remaining four candidates together got less than 7 thousand votes.

- According to official data, the candidate getting over 10 thousand votes in the elections, in the membership vote had received only 5.7 thousand votes in the national online voting. Also, the second most voted candidate from the membership got 2.1 thousand votes more than the popular vote in the online test. The candidate getting the lowest outcome in the membership voting got 10 times more votes than in the online voting. These data show that the online voting test applied in the first phase was not operational and far from the real support for candidates.
- ISP monitored the internal elections in FRESH covering different aspects and found both new developments (application for the first time of this format and massiveness), and problems related to shaping the legitimacy of the process, quality of candidacy based on programmes, as well the interventions from the party steering levels in the youth elections. The major lack of the process was related to the quality of candidates and their political vision. Most of their presentations were far from the standards of youth and students' elite in Albania.
- FRESH, after election of the Chairman, launched the process of elections for district chairmen. There was alternative voting in almost in all the branches and, in general, elections were correct. Various claims for irregularities, or other technical problems do not impair novelties in the election of new local FRESH chairmen and is a standard the SP has not yet applied at the party level. Some of the other key leaders were as well elected by compromise amongst the candidates running for FRESH's Chairman. Organization of the National Congress of this structure is planned for January of 2017.
- FRESH's online website (<http://fressh.al/>) contains information of about 1 year ago, does not contain any programme, the Statute, steering team, the FRESH Voice process, or other latest developments of this organization. Most of its identification documents, especially the Statute and programme, are first-time experiences, are non-finite drafts and indicators of the process happening within FRESH – that is processes of passing from a formal youth structure to an institutional youth structure.

■ IPD IN FRPD: NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

At the end of 2015, the FRPD ended its first historic process of voting based on the “1 member – 1 vote” principle for the organizations' Chairman. At the same time, part of the revitalising voting process between different candidates were most of the local branches, providing a positive model not yet applied by the DP itself in its local and central structures.

- In 2016, the FRPD was expected to deepen its democratic style of organization and operation. In fact, different from expectations, the FRPD spent 10 months of time to elect its steering team, its chairmanship, coordinators and secretariat. In June 2016, 6 months from the election of the Chairman, FRPD organised elections for the National Council. The media reported of data showing blood relation between the new party generation with the old traditional generation in the DP and issues of regional representation, which are critical indicators vis-à-vis the positive new developments of the contest for elections for the head of this organization. Such unjustifiable delay was mainly due to pressure from the senior steering party levels and rivalry between different competing groups.
- Only the fact that FRPD was for 10 months without a steering structure, 6 months with no Assembly, and afterwards even four months with no chairmanship shows of the critical status of the organization. Moreover, such situation was present at a time when, according to the statutory practice, the new Council had to be constituted in two weeks and the new steering team (the chairmanship and the secretariat) to be elected within the same terms.

- FRPD has organised various activities, mainly formative on the democratic and political education, and has been present in some political events and activities in the DP, but as in the case of FRESH, there has not been and there is still no internal and public debate on its identity, relationship with the relevant political party, youth platform and political offers of solutions on their problems.
- The FRPD does not have an online website, formally remaining accessible only in the social networks and in the *link* of the DP's website. Consequently, the FRPD, like most of the political youth organizations in the country, has disclosed no documents or basic data of the organization, including the platform, debates, structure, organigramme, component branches, political stances, financing up to the contact data.
- In October 2016, the FRPD managed to elect its secretariat and coordinators, following the traces of the organizational model of the DP, a model which is different from the traditional DP's model and the FRPD's model over the last 26 years or so. An instruction by the Chairman notified the deadline of voluntary candidacy for the steering seats and the alternative candidates were voted on the 15th of October. The Secretary General, five Deputy Chairmen, 20 heads of departments and 9 secretaries, that is in total 35 steering seats of FRPD, the highest number of the steering positions in this organization, were elected at the end of this process.
- The election product in the National Council and in the new steering staff was faced with different critics amongst the FRPD ranks and the DP branches, mainly due to lack of proportionality of representation in districts and limitation of competition with names having a family support from senior levels of the DP. However, the FRPD ended its election process at the local and national level, which was not something the DP managed to do during 2016.
- The FRPD has no official website. It is contained in the DP's website, but if one clicks in the DP's website, no information can be found on FRPD, except for a membership form. <http://www.pd.al/frpd/>.

■ IPD IN LRI: NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

The SMI announced in April launching of the National Convention of its youth organization at the student, high school pupils and other youngsters' level on 9 June.

- During the month of May, the SMI held several local activities serving its youth organization, from where the new forum leaders are expected to emerge.
- In June the SMI organised new elections for the LRI (Youth Movement for Integration). Different from FRESH and FRPD, elections in LRI were not held based on its membership, but based on the delegation vote. In the official elections held on 10th of June, from 2005 registered delegates, 463 delegates did not take part in the voting (a very high figure for the voting practices with delegates). The winner amongst the contestants was Floida Kërpaçi with 1035 votes, who run against, Klevis Pojana, who got 507 votes.
- In a follow-up to the new electoral process, LRI convened the National Steering Committee and elected its chairmanship and the new steering secretariat. The two rivals running for the Chairman's seat shared the most senior seats in the LRI. This remains a positive development for the organization.
- The LRI remains active in particular in public activities, although its strained efforts to be unified with the name of the party Chairman and everything he represents weaken the representative structure, relative independence, its model and public impact.
- The LRI has been active, particularly in the annual meetings in Jalë (Sarandë) intertwining summer holidays with political meetings of the left-wing leaders in Albania and invitees from different countries. The LRI has an non-active official website (<http://www.lri.al>). The latest information posted there dates back some years ago. The official website has reflected no change in the steering team of LRI, or of its activities, while public documents of the political programme and of the party statute are lacking.

PARTIES AND THEIR OFFICIAL ACTIVITY ONLINE

- The new trend, the new social media are transformed into major means of communication for the political parties with their structures and the electorate. Each of the political parties, each political leader and local branch has open accounts in one of the social networks. Most of declarations and political replications, notifications and photos from activities are primarily distributed via social media and are afterwards shared by the traditional visual media, or the press.

ADRESAT ONLINE TË PARTIVE KRYESORE POLITIKE

• Adresa online e PS	http://ps.al
• Adresa online e PD	www.pd.al
• Adresa online e LSI	www.lsi.al
• Adresa online e PDIU	http://pdiu.al
• Adresa online e PR	http://prsh.al
• Adresa online e PAA	http://paa.com.al
• Adresa online e PBDNJ	http://al.pbdnj.com
• Adresa online e LZHK	http://lzhk.al
• Adresa online e PDK	www.pdk.al
• Adresa online e SFIDA	www.sfidapershqiperine.com
• Adresa online e LIBRA	http://libra.al/

- At the period of monitoring, only four political parties had websites, and even them had very limited and symbolic presentational materials. Due to the positive media pressure, and through direct communication with the parliamentary political parties (either directly or indirectly parliamentary parties), by the end of 2016 all the political parties subjected to monitoring opened a formal website, symbolically publishing general data on them. The table below illustrates the party names and their online addresses.
- The dominant part of the political parties continue having significant shortcomings in the information they share online, but the general trend is going forward to a more qualitative and competitive information, especially the inclusion of the contact addresses, the steering party team, basic statutory programme and documentation, as well as the publication of the most important political activities/ declarations.

■ IPD: MAJOR FINDINGS IN POLITICAL PARTIES IN VLORA

Prepared by: Silvana JAUPAJ, expert at the Institute of Political Studies, Vlora

INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Vlora is for years considered a bastion of left-wing politics. The last governing right-wing mandate in Vlora dates back in the 1996 both at the local and parliamentary elections. Since then (20 years), the left-wing has had a dominating parliamentary representation and has regularly led the municipality of Vlora. With the new administrative division, Vlora is expanded with other units and the difference in votes between the two political wings remains visible, compared with most of other major municipalities of the country.

In the last local elections (2015), in the majority voting, the left-wing candidate won about 32 thousand votes against 17 thousand votes of the right-wing candidate, or 61% to 33% of the vote. In the proportional voting, the left-wing coalition won 68% of the vote against 27% of the right-wing coalition, the PS as a political subject received over 21 thousand votes, against 10 thousand votes won by the DP. In Vlora Municipal Council, the left-wing is represented by 29 members and right-wing with 11 councillors. In the left-wing coalition, the SP has 18 councillors, followed by the SMI with 5 councillors, whereas the DP has 9 councillors, followed by two small parties with 1 councillor.

Since the parliamentary elections of 2013 there have been drastic changes in the direction of branches of the two main political parties in Vlora, the SP and the DP. The two parties changed their local chairmen and local organization, upon the new territorial organization.

REPORT ON INTERNAL DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS IN THE SP OF VLORA

The latest elections for the chairman of the Socialist Party of Vlora were held in 2012, when the former Deputy Mayor Edmond Leka was the winner with only 20 votes more against Gjergj Haziraj. In the 2013 elections, the SP ended up a winner, and Prime Minister Rama became its MP. After the parliamentary elections and in the eve of local elections, the SP branch in Vlora launched a complete re-organization process.

- The legitimate mandate of the branch chairman had expired, so in such circumstances no new elections were held, but there were instead transitional appointment practices until the complete re-organization of the party from below. The procedure followed for the selection of the candidate/candidates for the branch party chairman, who upon the approval of the SP, was pass for voting by the Socialist Assembly of Vlora, has led to debates over the level of transparency, representation and the meritocracy system.
- At the organizational level, the SP operated with the appointment of national local coordinators, including Gjirokastra and Vlora Regions, where the MP Koco Kokëdhima, one of the closest associates of Prime Minister and Chairman of the Socialist Party, Edi Rama, was appointed as the Party Coordinator. At his local function, he initiated a comprehensive process of re-organization, which was not consistent with the practice provided for in SP's Statute, but served as a local experiment for the party itself. The new practice of appointment of coordinators for the party, for youth and women - all at the regional level, and later at the municipal level, was aimed at the registration of new members, expanding the membership and election of base management from scratch, to afterwards reach to the main leaders at the local and regional level.
- Elections for the new heads of branches were held at the end of May. Two candidates were approved by the SP Vlora Chairmanship, one of whom resigned later in the contest, so only one formal candidate was remained. Anduen Tahiraj, a new local figure at the Socialist Party of Vlora was elected with 221 votes in favour and 21 votes against. After the election he said that before the

2015-2016 reform, the SP Vlora Branch counted only 1650 members, while in May 2016 it counted 8,500 members, and it is *“much younger in age, is liberated from fictitiousness, it is all active and has an entirely renewed political structure, with a representative and balanced social structure.”* His views faced criticism from the traditional SP Vlora members, who accused the current structure of formalism, establishment of parallel structures, as well as limitation of competitive democracy within the party.

- In a speech at the SP Congress, the Coordinator of Vlora reported that before the election process in Vlora and the region, *“in some areas socialist organizations were almost completely dismantled. In some cases, Socialist organizations were set up with all the members of a family or next-of-kin, there were many heads of Socialist organizations who were not elected for more than 10 years not mentioning those times when we had chairmen without organizations. About half the membership was fictitious in our membership records. The structure was closed, calcified or not attractive for new memberships. Some leaders considered Socialist organizations as personal property, even as a hereditary property.”* According to the Regional Coordinator Kokëdhima (which is also the official stance of SP Vlora), the principle upon which the internal elections and SP re-organization were held was *“one person, one party function.”* The list of delegates to the Congress was dominated by new feeds and names, following the elected individuals for the Assembly and senior management in municipalities. The SP reported that all elections in the Socialist organizations were held by secret ballot and between two candidates, that is 82% of leaders of organizations were elected for the first time and that 70% of those elected are under the age of 40.
- Election of 5th of March vote for delegates at the municipal level ended up in 29 delegates, 15 “friends” and 14 “girlfriends”, most of whom delegates for the first time in the history of SP’s representation. Official participation in voting was reported to be high even for about ¼ of new membership involved in the electoral process. In violation to the SP’s statutory provisions, Vlora was the only unit where an SP MP included his name in the list of delegates, although MPs are to be automatically delegates. The SP Vlora considers a success the fact that, according to them, it is the first region that has created a database with detailed information on the party membership, containing data on their occupation and political commitment, as well as on the contacts at every level, from the central municipality to the smaller remoter units.
- After the election of delegates and of heads of grass-root units, the second most important event in Vlora was holding of the referendum on 9 April. At the regional level, SP Vlora announced the participation of 81% of its members, or 17626 voters. Of these, 93% voted “in favour” and 7% “against”. At the municipal level in Vlora, the SP registered 7043 voters, of whom 92% voted “in favour” and 8% voted “against”.
- The whole process of elections in Vlora and in other entities involved with the region has caused internal political debates in the SP, even at the national level (debates at the National Assembly, the Congress, or in the public media). Disputes are mainly related with the legitimacy of the electoral practices and the relationship of the region/municipality coordinator with existing structures, parliamentary group and traditional leading teams in Vlora. Critics of this practice, even those MPs or political figures who have run Vlora municipality or its local organizations, are sceptical about the results achieved, and evaluate the quality of the election process as counter-effective against the expectations and goals of 2017. Criticism is related to new arrivals, who, according to critical voices, are inexperienced, have no identity relations with the SP, to the process of appointments in the management level of the SP, as well as to the fictitiousness of voting for delegates for elections in the grass root structures and for the referendum. However, there has been no official written document covering the criticism, or initiatives within the SP on motions of confidence or appeal to the relevant structures created according to the Statute. The fact remains that the practice followed in the organization of SP branch of Vlora and in other units of the district is unique, and it is not applied in the other 10 regions, with the exception of Gjirokastra.
- Following the Congress, SP Vlora went through two shocks because of two reasons: the first one is that the Coordinator of the SP chairmanship in change of Vlora lost his parliamentary mandate

and, after a period of suspense, a new coordinator was assigned, Minister Gjinkuri. The second reason is that the rivalry between the new flows in the party and the traditional base was reflected even in the differences in the stances of the MPs of Vlora.

- According to the organizational practices, the SP should have organised regular chairmanship meetings, with the attendance of MPs as well (the PM is an MP from Vlora), analysing the concerns and dissatisfaction and resolving them through the power of vote and of other democratic practices. None of the above happened in the case of Vlora. There were no meetings, no analyses, there was no public engagement of the MP-Prime Minister in the conflict of the two parallel lines in the local SP, and, on the other hand, the legitimacy of the local branch and of the local SP chairman elected through the vote was not questioned.
- Axis of criticism and debate on the state of SP Vlora is related to the level of power this party owns and exercises compared to the power of particular individuals. A number of local left-wing leadership figures during the transition have expressed criticism on their shift and the new organizational scheme applied in Vlora, whereas the new management have been and remain supportive of their reform line, largely promotional of a new political generation in the local decision-making.
- In contrast to past practices, there were no cases of debate between SP's local leaders and local leaders in the municipality, and there were no public statements in defence of the municipality from the attacks coming from the opposition. In the case of Vlora, it seems like the PS and the municipality are two parallel segments, fully understanding each-other, for both parties reflect the political stance of the SP leadership in Tirana. The municipality follows the line of the PS Chairman, the local branch follows the line of the former MP of the constituency, but because the discussions have not led to conflicts, or are not explained publicly, local parties have not held preferential positions.
- From September, several changes expressing the new direction the new government were voiced from the central coordinators. Hence, the Organizational Secretary and 8 heads of local organizations were changed; there were changes also in the levels of commissions and other party organizational structures. Last months, the SP Vlora structure is focused on preparations for the next election's campaign. PS Vlora organized elections for a new chairman of FRESH, and has now established local structures under its national organizational scheme.
- Another aspect of importance for internal democracy and the concept of public transparency is the website; in the case of SP Vlora, it has no official website, no public verifiable data for the public opinion outside the party organization, no media or other public presentation mechanisms and no public data on costs and funding sources.
- PS Vlora has not organised conferences or meetings with the media and interest groups, but has instead been focused more on the political agenda (activities that are required from the centre, or accompaniment of the Prime Minister during his activities, even as an MP of Vlora), and there have been no joint meetings between allied parties in the city.

REPORT ON INTERNAL DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS IN DP VLORA

After the deep loss in the parliamentary elections (2013), the head of DP Vlora issued their resignation. Valbona Mezini and Moisi Meminaj run for the new election process (2014). At the end of voting, the delegates gathered at the Conference of Vlora casted 260 votes in favour of the main candidate and 170 votes in favour for the other candidate. It is worth mentioning that the vote was due to a second runoff phase, because earlier the 14 candidates targeted the local mayor's office. This detail is important to understand the positive rivalry spirit between Democrats in Vlora, in the conditions of a new political life in opposition.

- Meminaj's mandate, according to the DP Statute, was valid until 2018, i.e. until after the

parliamentary elections of 2017. However, by a decision of the Democratic Party Chairmanship in April 2016, Vlora branch was one of 35 branches selected to go through new early elections. The official motivation was related to the new administrative division and the need for a more active and better organized party on the eve of parliamentary elections next year.

- Before this decision, DP Vlora had marked no important internal balance-sheet of democratic developments. At the end of last year, PD Vlora engaged in election, based on the one member - one vote for the FRPD, as well as in matters of internal organization, mainly in the role of “shadow government” for local problems concerning the citizens of Vlora.
- The DP’s Chairmanship decision for new elections in Vlora was accompanied by fierce public debate and critical reactions from leaders of PD Vlora. Pronouncements through local and national media, as well as meetings with the membership structures that initiated a petition addressed to the party chairmanship and the DP Chairman Mr. Basha, expressed dissatisfaction with the decision, considering it anti-statutory. Meminaj stated that the alibi of re-organization due to the new territorial division given by the party chairmanship was not grounded. On May 11, he rejected the claim that about 1/3 of the elected leadership in 2014 is distributed in two other municipalities, in Himara and Selenica, stating that only 8 out of the 35 members of the leadership are affected by this new territorial division. Earlier, on May 9, Meminaj called the decision on re-organization of DP Vlora “*as a political suicide just a year before parliamentary elections*”. He said all the party grass root shared the same opinion and that in general, there are 21 Democratic Party branch chairmen who are categorically against the order for new elections in the middle of their statutory mandate. The full response of the DP Vlora chairmanship and local leaders came just days after the decision on re-organization. In this reaction (3 May 2016), they considered the decision of the DP leadership “*a firing squad without trial*”, alleging non-observance of the Statute and failure to gather the opinion of the Party’s grass root, directly blaming the persons delegated from the centre for the situation and for manipulation of truth, etc. DP Vlora Chairmanship expressed its confidence that the decision on its dissolution was made without an analysis, without clear criteria, without consultation, was selective and done for narrow clan interests in the managing high dome. They called on Chairman Basha and the PD to review the decision, a request that was not taken into consideration.
- In the whole chronology related to the decision on early elections for the DP Vlora Branch and, consequently, on the suspension of the statutory mandate of its members, what is obviously visible is the lack of written rules and statutory mechanisms examining and settling disagreements in such cases. When asked, the DP Vlora officials accepted that they have lodged no application against the decision with the party’s Appeal Committee, which is a structure charged with the role of the court within the party in cases of such statutory conflicts and competencies. Also, the chronology shows of great communication problems between the central DP structures and local DP structures in Vlora. This becomes even more visible given the fact that immediately after the decision, the person in charge of the district of Vlora in the DP’s chairmanship was changed.
- By the end of the year, DP Vlora had not yet resolved the issue of its Chairman, while the former local Chairman has distanced himself from the official party line through his public statements. Ironically, this approach facilitates the space for the DP headquarters to intervene for an emergency or final solution, but delays in action, elections in sections, internal rivalries and debate through the media, have contributed to the prolongation of the process beyond any expectation. The main argument of the local branch for delaying the process, according to it, is not related to their internal conflicts, but with technical problems related to the new organizational structure and its impact on the party’s branch Vlora, under the new organizational scheme, with a new branch in Selenicë in Himarë and in the municipality of Vlora. Until the final branch election, the old party leadership and management structures have a mandate of representation and are in general in operation.
- In other organizational aspects, DP Vlora had no measurable events or reference data. There have been no changes in the leadership structures or representative structures of youth and women

organizations. In the recent months, DP Vlora has generally focused on political action against the left-wing government and the left-wing governance of Tirana, not on internal party matters. Such were the public protests of a group of its activists against some communist-era slogans appearing in some public places, as well as opposition against local policies of the municipality of Vlora.

- DP Vlora Branch has no public data on its working program, structure, decision-making, contacts, database, finance and other important elements for the public image and public credibility of a political party. PD Vlora has no website, media directory or any other public register, but is mainly focused on social networks. In the analysis of social networks (focused on DP Vlora Branch), what is impressing is the political discourse related to the daily problems and concerns, and the effort to share the official news coming from the headquarters in Tirana, especially news focused on Chairman Basha and former Chairman Berisha. References on other political figures of central DP are missing.

REPORT ON IPD IN OTHER PARTIES IN VLORA MUNICIPALITY

In general, the local branches of other political parties in Vlora, except for the JIUP, have not had any election processes, nor have they organised political organizational activities. The SMI branch, in the third trimester of the year suffered a political shift westwards, towards the SP, mainly due to disagreements between the local and central leaders of this party. Currently the SMI has not organised elections, but has appointed a coordinator for the municipality and the region.

- The JIUP is the only political party holding fair and statutory elections for the local party chairman and chairmanship in Vlora. In the elections of 21 May in Vlora, the contest for the JIUP was run between Idrizi and Hyseni and was won with over 80% of the vote by the Chairman Shpetim Idrizi. Also, in the election for the local branch chairman of JIUP Vlora, the winner was Nikolin Hasani with 72% of votes. According to data obtained by JIUP Vlora, 1,400 voters were called in the elections and they were attended by 75.5% of them. Elections were held based on the “one member - one vote” principle and there was no media report on alleged irregularities or disputes. The fact that MP D. Tahiri was not involved in these elections was interesting. For two consecutive mandates he was a member of JIUP for the Region of Vlora. His non-engagement is a concrete act of further distancing and identification with the Democratic Party, in which structures he is now a part of. Local RP sources report that Tahiri is expected to join the party in the upcoming parliamentary elections.
- It should be noted that the SP, DP and SMI have organised local conventions of youth organizations, FRESH and LRI. In general, local elections were of good quality and competitive in each organization, however, at the national level, representation of Vlora branches of these youth structures was symbolic, a critical outcome for Vlora’s political youth representation in the central decision-making of political parties.

■ IPD: MAJOR FINDINGS OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN SHKODRA

Prepared by: Ardita REÇI, expert of the Political Studies Institute, Shkodër

Introduction

The Municipality of Shkodra is considered a bastion of right-wing in politics. This is due to the history of elections, as most of them are won from the Democratic Party candidates, since the establishment of a pluralistic political regime in the country.

Since the first elections of 26 July 1992, when 5 representatives of different political groups run for the seat of Mayor of Shkodra, the winner was the PD candidate, Filip Guraziu. The Municipal Council was also dominated by the DP. More specifically, it was composed of 15 DP members, 4 SP members, 1 RP member and 1 SDP member. In the second pluralist elections, held on 20 October 1996, the municipal elections were won through a run-off by the political grouping of “the united Shkodra right-wing”. This was the only time when management of Shkodra was not in the hands of the DP, which was the losing party in the runoff. Until the elections of 1 October 2000, the Municipality was led by Bahri Boriçi. The composition of the City Council was as follows: the PD and its allies 11 seats, “The United Shkodra Right-Wing” 4 seats, the SP and its allies 6 seats. The elections of 1 October 2000 resulted in the victory of the Democratic Party candidate, Ormir Rusi. The DP had the majority in the Municipal Council, together with the allied right-wing parties. The elections of 12 October 2003 were won by Artan Haxhi of the DP. The winner in the elections of 18 February 2007 and of 8 May 2011 was Lorenc Luka, from the PD.

The outcomes of the last elections, held on 21 June 2015, were in favour of the Democratic Party candidate Voltana Ademi, who from about 39 thousand votes, that is almost 10 thousand more votes than the left-wing candidate Kati Bazhdari. Vullnet Elbasani, the independent candidate, got over 1700 votes. While the Municipal Council 27 seats were won by representatives of right coalition The Alliance for Jobs and Dignity, with 34,481 votes, or 50.95% of the votes (21 DP councillors, 2 RP councillors, 1 MDL councillor, 1 ANFP councillor, 1 AWP councillor and 1 EAP councillor). Left coalition, The Alliance for European Albania, won 24 seats, with 29609 votes, or 43.75% of votes (9 SP councillors, 10 SMI councillors, 1 NDS councillor, 1 MSP councillor, 1 LDP councillor, 1 CDP councillor, 1 SDP councillor), a total of 51 members, representatives of the extended municipality, now containing 10 other territorial units, after the new administrative division. The Municipal Council votes changed even the ranking of parties in Shkodra, where the second party with the largest representation in this Municipality, following the DP, was the SMI, followed by the SP in the third place.

REPORT ON INTERNAL DEMOCARY AND ELECTIONS IN SP SHKODRA

The Socialist Party has gone through intensive developments over the last years, mainly due to the political conflict between the centre and some PMs of Shkodra Region.

- Upon an order, Gëzim Uruçi was discharged from the SP management. Up until the elections of 27 May, the task of the SP Shkodra Chairman was charged to MP Mimoza Hafizi for the city, and Namik Kopliku for villages. New elections were held on 27 May 2016 and Arvit Osja was elected the new SP Chairman for Shkodra. The candidacy of Osja was named by the SP Chairmanship, and was accompanied by debates and claims by the party membership alleging violation of Article 31 of the SP Statute. Discussions have continued regarding the failure to implement the “one member – one vote” principle for the Assembly. The latter has elected 11 candidacies, from which only Osja’s candidacy was approved by an order.
- Regarding the organizational aspect, elections were chaired by the Assembly members, Congress delegates and MPs. The Local Coordinator was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ditmir Bushati,

who has not saved diplomatic tones for managing the election situation within the party. When Bushati was named as the Coordinator he found many organizational issues, which were difficult to be answered. The members have stated that re-organization, which was one of his tasks, was not in compliance with the SP Statute.

- The principle of feeds from the Assembly candidates was used for organising the elections. Part of the list of delegates to the Congress were not the same people proposed by the structures, but personal ties. People who were not even SP members attended the Congress, such as the actor Bruno Shllaku, or new members with no contribution in the party. They were in total 4 women and 7 men. Only two had been delegates before, while all the rest were new. The membership has expressed frequent complaints, covered even by the local media, on fictitiousness and preferential selections by the commission.
- Participation in the referendum of 9 April at the regional level in Shkodra was satisfactory, by 93%, meaning 1400 members/votes. This election process in Shkodra and in the other units included in the region has caused internal political debates in the SP. The SP Member of Parliament Mimoza Hafizi addressed a letter to the Socialist Party Election Commission of the Municipality of Shkodra claiming that the SP – Municipality of Shkodra, wishes to officially be familiarised with the new composition of the Commission. Hafizi did as well ask for the reasons why such commission is not convened, as well as for the address lists of the voting centres in the Municipality of Shkodra. The last item in Hafizi's letter was the need to contact the Election Commission with the aim of accrediting its observers for the referendum in the Municipality of Shkodra.
- On 27 June, the SP's Shkodra Member of Parliament Mimoza Hafizi submitted to the Parliament an initiative for constitutional amendments, signed by 10 left-wing and right-wing candidates. Such initiative asks for the President of the Republic to be elected by the people. It has received a lot of attention in Shkodra and is widely covered in the news features and debates in the local media. Elections for the SP Chairman in the Municipality of Vau i Dejës were held on 1 July, where Kristjan Shkreli was the winner. He told the media that the voting process, where he run against Mark Zhuri, was smooth. Shkreli used to be the Mayor of the Commune of Temal. In the elections of the 1st of July he received 32 votes, against 28 votes received by Zhuri. Shkreli states that clashes in the Vau i Dejës SP have settled and that the socialists there are now united. The only candidate of Sokol Shkreli was rejected earlier by this branch, as the party members asked for a contest between two candidates.
- The official winner in Malësia e Madhe is Lulzim Zara, as the only candidate in voting. The winner in Bashkia e Pukës is Marash Kola, and in Fushë-Arrëz Paulin Peraj. The entire process is freely covered by the local media, including the different opinions within the ranks of the SP membership.
- What was striking during September was the political debate between Prime Minister Rama and Mayor Ademi. The meeting of the extended local chairmanship under the auspicious of the Prime Minister mainly covered changes in regional directors dependant on the central government and organization issues. The major topic of the meeting of the Prime Minister in Shkodër and Vau i Dejës were the employments and requests by the militants for jobs in the administration depending on central government.
- On 9 October, the Socialist MP of Shkodra, Namik Kopliku, told the media that departure of MP Mimoza Hafizi from the SP, who parted from the SP membership ranks to joint first the initiative and further the party established by Ben Blushi, named LIBRA, marks a second loss in the socialist structures in Shkodra following Tom Doshi. Kopliku added that while the 2017 parliamentary electoral battle is approaching, he does not see SP's success in specific names, but in the team. Currently, the Socialist Party of the Region of Shkodra is represented in Parliament by two MPs, Namik Kopliku and Paulin Sterkaj, from 4 MPs it won in 2013.
- On 30 October, the SP Shkodër announced launching of the organization of this political party for future parliamentary elections. The extended leadership meeting was attended even by the

Coordinator for Shkodra, Minister Bushati. It was interesting that the meeting was held in two sessions -- the first session was organised with the party structures and the second session was attended only by the directors of local institutions, who, by law, must be non-partisan and product of their merit/civil service competition.

- The election process for the new FRESSH Chairman ended in late October. The winner in these elections for the Region of Shkodra was the candidate Elsamed Muka, as reported on 23 October, who lost the competition for FRESH Chairman at the national level. The only problem encountered was duplication of names on the lists, which, according to the election commission members, has not been rare as a phenomenon.
- On 6 November, FRESH Chairman for Shkodra, Xh. Halili, resigned from the seat and the elections. FRESH entered the next elections with other youth figures, a process that ended in the national elections of this organization.
- An important aspect of internal democracy and the concept of public transparency in the SP Shkodra branch is the fact that it has an official website, but according to official sources, «due to lack of personnel» it is not updated with information on the party activities. In the meantime there are no public verifiable data on the level of expenditures and sources of party financing, there are no media or other public presentation mechanisms and there are no public data on the costs and sources of party funding.

REPORT ON INTERNAL DEMOCACY AND ELECTIONS IN DP SHKODRA

After loosing the latest parliamentary elections (2013), the Democratic Party has made re-organizations for preparing its structures for the 2017 elections.

- Arben Ristani, DP's Secretary General, was named in 2016, as the DP Coordinator for the Region of Shkodra. About the elections in the local DP branch, they were conceived by a closed working group composed of Ristani, Greta Bardeli (elected Chairwomen of the Region of Shkodra) Hysni Burgaj, Ramadan Likaj and Mimoza Rexhvelaj.
- On 29 July, only one day before the elections for the DP Chairman in the Administrative Unit of Velipojë, dissatisfaction appeared, labelled as "crashes" of the DP in this area. The members of DP in Velipoja have claimed that the political leaders in Shkoder and the Regional Coordinator have supported people who have campaigned for the left-wing. The situation in this unit got aggravated up to physical confrontations between supporters and contestants. Attending the contest for the DP's leadership in Velipoja were Altin Kaçi, Sandër Viluni and Nikolla Marku. Nikolla Marku was the winner, where from 24 votes he received 13 votes, while his rivals got 10 votes. The winner was bitterly attacked by the local SP due to an on-going trial, which brought no changes in this unit.
- On 31 July, PD Vau i Dejes held its first Electoral Assembly, which was concluded with the vote for the new chairman of this DP branch. At the end of vote counting, Agim Bushati, who received 82 votes, won the elections, against the other candidate Nikolin Kaçi, who got 26 votes. On 5 August elections for the DP Chairman of Malësia e Madhe were held, and won by Anton Kokaj with over 95% of votes.
- A political debate in the DP emerged from the conflict in the Municipality Council among the Democrats and their allies, due to fluid alliances in voting with the SMI. Official relations between local DP leaders and PD leaders at the Municipality Shkodra have not been very sound, often producing news in local and national media. This is a feature of the stronghold areas, especially when the ruling party is in opposition, and the only source of appointment for the administration is the Municipality, not the party branch.
- In October local branches of Shkodra, Malësi e Madhe, and others have started preparations for operational structures for the upcoming elections. Meetings of chairmanships and working groups have been convened in service of this development. Youth and women structures were completed

as well.

- As regards level of public transparency, DP Shkodra branch has a website in the social network of Facebook, mainly reflecting activities of this organization. It has no website and is not much present in the central media, unlike what happens with some other major cities.

REPORT ON IPD IN OTHER PARTIES OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SHKODRA

- In Shkodra the SMI has a consistent basis, mainly due to the high number of votes in 2013. The MSI won an MP in Shkoder (Agron Çela), his merits and not the party merits, were decisive in getting the mandate. The same trend was maintained in the local elections of 2015, as the SMI won 10 seats in the Municipal Council, a record number for a third political party.
- The most important voting process was related to the vote for the SMI Chairman and delegates to the Congress. On November 6, 3,500 members were called in the vote in Shkodra, with Meta resulted as the winning candidate with an absolute majority of votes. It is worth mentioning that the SMI has not held elections for the branch chairman, but has organised its youth convention. In May about 250 young people voted for the new chair of LRI, Eduina Ymeri. The Youth Convention for Puka was organised on 11 July, where the winner was again a girl, Romina Kuci.
- During the monitoring period, the SMI and small parties in Shkodra have been part of the debates on the new electoral law, and various issues related specifically to Shkodra. A series of other processes in the small political parties in Shkodra, related to election or appointment of party chairmen, with changes in the structure or the organizational meetings on the eve of the election campaign are minor indicators of the activity of other political parties in Shkodra, but also symbolic indicators on the lack of democracy standards in the party.

■ REPORT: POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTY FINANCING IN 2016

Prepared by: Ervin KARAMUÇO, expert of the Institute of Political Studies

- Constant efforts have to be undertaken in the legal framework and regarding other rules, seen as indispensable to guarantee financial equality and fair competition between the political parties and other independent candidates. Currently, the political election rules express a deep inequality, which runs contrary to the constitutional principles and the legal order in general.
- The Law "On Political Parties" should be amended with additional provisions binding for the political party activities, related to self-publication of financial statements, information related to their members, level of membership quota they pay, periodical balance-sheets, revenues and expenditures as well as campaign donors and the ones offered during the non-election years.
- The General Prosecution Office, the High Inspectorate on Disclosure of Assets and Prevention of the Conflict of Interest, the General Tax Directorate and the other law-enforcement bodies in this field should be more effective in comprehensive and coordinated investigations in the cases of suspicious funding of political parties, by uncovering the course of revenues.
- Cases of public denouncements of vote buying, other threats or physical attacks happening in the political life and the abuse with the use of state and public reserves during campaigns should be in the focus of the law-enforcement bodies so as to prevent them in due time and to make accountable the responsible persons with or without immunity.
- The effective legal provisions related to the organization and operation of political parties do not enable detailed rules as to the need to keep the financial registers for a certain time, or on whether to destroy them altogether immediately. Failure to provide for such norm, in the case of suspicious funding, makes it possible for the political entities to find it easy to escape from latter investigations that can be held in such cases.

- The political parties in Albania do not make the financial statement public for the wide public, or their own membership. The only information is the one enabled from the Central Election Commission published in the CEC's website. Lack of transparency in this respect is flagrant and enables no public access of citizens over the political parties, which can tomorrow get the fate of the country in their own hands.
- The official website of political parties in Albania have no valid information on political party funding regarding party funding, donors, financial quotas, etc. There are cases, like the SMI, making a step forward in the publication of some financial data (2016), but they too are dominated from formal data and are mainly sponsored by voluntary atypical initiatives for the political parties. In all the parties, the members consider it difficult to get information on the funds their parties have received and spent.
- According to the Law "On the right to information, public transparency has become a criteria of evaluation and basic standard for any public institution, political parties as organizations carrying out constitutional activities and including public title holders. The parties themselves are generators and monitoring entities of this Law, but in a paradox situation (contrary to what provided for above) they have met no kind of standards in this aspect. The parties continue to be closed to the public and are hermetic when it comes to transparency and public accountability.
- The Albanian legislation on political parties is incomplete and ambiguous. Monitoring carried out by the ISP shows that only 12 out of 126 registered political parties have periodically reported changes that are required by the Law. The other part of the parties has ignored legal obligation, some political parties appear to be still active with leaders who are not even amongst us any longer. Fictitiousness of political parties is accepted even by the CEC, which, in its 2015 annual report highlights that out of the 118 political parties that should be subjected to auditing, 71 political parties could not be reached by the certified accountants hired by the Central Election Commission.
- Referring to the minimal public information standard, be it in the financial aspect, most of these political parties have no website, no media, or other public information sources on the programme, structures, activity and their financial data. The main political parliamentary parties: the SP, DP, MSI, JIUP have official partially updated websites. The other parties in the Parliament, like the CDP, UHRP, and others have inactive websites, while the remaining parties, the MND, RP, AEP and others have no effective website.
- In the overwhelming part of cases the political parties are found to file with delays, or to never file their financial statements with the CEC. The law does not provide for a deadline for filing the financial self-declaration statements by the political parties and such a gap is used abusively by many political subjects. In these cases, no sanctions or other administrative measures imposed on them have been identified. The CEC plays a crucial role in the auditing of political parties, but its capacities are insufficient and such a supervisory mission cannot be realised.

INTRODUCTION

The conduct of political activity within the Albanian political party financing remains an indicator of national importance for strengthening of democracy, rule of law, decriminalization of politics and political catharsis against illegal practices in Albania. In the 2013 political elections and the 2015 administrative elections, political parties in Albania continued to be covered by the national and international reports on issues related to transparency of funding and sponsorship of their activities. Also, despite legal amendments in 2011 and 2014 to Law "On Political Parties", there is no permanent solution to all the problems of party financing and transparency in this area, which raises many doubts for a dishonest political competition and for consumption of irregular practices, or of practices with a criminal nature.

In March 2016, the Institute of Political Studies (ISP) with the support of Friedrich Ebert Foundation took the initiative of establishing a database on political parties, elections and political institutions in Albania. This project marks the first publication of the main documents of political parties since 1990. The database remains an archive dedicated to political parties, the media, political science students, NGOs operating in this field, as well as other groups of individuals having an interest on issues of organization and operation of political parties.

Within this project, in addition to the publication of fundamental political documents, statutes and programs, and internal elections and developments, a special place is covered by financing practices and problems encountered in the political life of the country. The database www.politike.al has tried to, *inter alia*, reflect the best practices of funding of political parties in regional and European countries, professional studies on Albanian and European legislation on political parties and elections and special aspects of the study report and the political parties' activities.

- Materials for issues on financing of political parties are provided primarily through the official reports published by the Central Election Commission, as well as special reports compiled by licensed auditors who are employed part-time by the CEC. In the meantime, other sources for recognizing the state of financing practices are the reports of international organizations, including mainly the OSCE, Council of Europe and the EU Commission.
- Other materials are provided through studying and researching on the websites of political parties and any other source used by them to fulfil the obligation of transparency to the public and state institutions.

■ CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS ON POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

- Article 9 of the Constitution of Albania provides that political parties must be organized in accordance with democratic principles, and that their financial resources and expenses shall always be made public. In accordance to this provision, the legislation on political parties specifies the principles and standards related to the democratic rules of operation, but fails to provide for institutional mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the law, except for the Central Election Commission, which controls the self-declarations of political parties through licensed auditors.
- Annual funding of the activity of political is governed by Law No. 8580, of 17. 2. 2000 «On Political Parties», as amended. Law «On Political Parties», limits in Article 21 thereof, the political parties from receiving financial and material donations from governments, foreign private or public entities. This article allows for donations or assistance coming from partisan international parties or unions, individuals, Albanian natural or legal persons. The law provides that the donation of non-public funds of more than ALL 100,000 (around EUR 720) should be done only in a special account, opened in a bank by the political party. Also, appropriation of non-public funds, carried out by entities failing to declare their identity or the identity, or which identity is not clearly identified by the beneficiary political party is prohibited.
- According to the law on political parties provision of funds by a legal person, or any of its shareholders in the event it has receive public funds, public contracts or concessions in the past 2 years worth over ALL 10 million, operates in the media domain, has been a partner with public funds in various projects, has monetary obligations towards the state budget or any public institution, is prohibited.
- Regarding public funding assistance, the Law «On political parties», provides that every year the State Budget allocated a financial assistance fund for performing annual political parties. This financial support is reflected in the state budget for non-election years. Parliamentary parties were granted a building for their headquarters and local branches. This opportunity is also given to

the political parties, the average vote of which was greater than 1% nationally in the last three parliamentary elections. When no free buildings for this purpose, the State undertakes to pay the rent of the headquarters and local offices of the political party.

- Regarding public funding assistance, Law “On political parties”, provides that every year the State Budget allocates a fund of financial assistance for the annual political parties’ activities. Such financial support is reflected in the State Budget for non-election years. Parliamentary parties were provided with a building to serve as their headquarters and local branches. This facility is also given to the political parties, the average vote of which was greater than 1% at the national level in the last three parliamentary elections. When there are no free buildings for this purpose, the State undertakes to pay the rent of the headquarters and local offices of the political party.
- Electoral subjects can receive funding for the purposes of their election campaign only by domestic natural or legal persons. The amount any natural or legal person can give to an electoral subject cannot be greater than ALL 1 million, or its equivalent in goods or services. The total expense of a political party, including their candidates for an election campaign, should not exceed 10 times the highest amount that an electoral subject has obtained from public funds, according to the Electoral Code.
- Regarding financing of electoral campaigns, the law provides that political parties participating in the elections and receiving not less than 0.5 percent of the vote nationwide, receive funding from the State Budget, according to the number of votes each party received in those elections. The fund is established by a decision of the Assembly and constitutes a separate line in the State Budget. The CEC establishes by decision the monetary value of a valid vote, by dividing the general approved fund by the total number of valid votes collected by political parties participating in the next elections, which have won no less than 0.5 per cent of the valid votes nationwide.

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL ON POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING

- The Electoral Code stipulates that the Central Election Commission is responsible for monitoring and supervising the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns. The CEC selects the list of certified public accountants and assigns them randomly to audit the funds and expenditures of political parties, and supervises the financing of political parties, through the control of financial documents and accounts of political parties. The CEC imposes sanctions in cases of violations of the law and determines the amount of public funding allocated to each political party in the form of annual financial assistance. This institution is also responsible for organizing awareness and training programs for the financing of political parties and entities involved in this process, according to this law.
- The Law “On Political Parties” obliges political parties in Albania to maintain internal accounting books and report on their available assets, income and expenses. Parties must submit their financial reports once a year at the Central Election Commission (CEC), together with the audit report prepared by certified accountants. The annual financial statements are prepared, signed and submitted by the person responsible for finances in the political party, or the person chosen as defined in the Statute of the party. In cases of election year, the party’s annual financial report must be submitted together with the financial report of the electoral campaign. The annual financial report, the audit report and the report of the CEC should be published on the official website of the CEC no later than 30 days from the date of their submission to the CEC.
- Each electoral subject must register in a special register, which sample form is adopted by a Decision of the CEC, the amount of funds received for any natural or legal person, as well as other data related to clear identification the donor. At the time of donation, the donor shall sign a statement pledging that it does not fall under the circumstances of the Electoral Code bans and bears personal responsibility for any false declaration.
- No later than 5 days after the announcement of final election results for each political party

registered as an electoral subject, the CEC appoints by lot one or more certified auditors to audit the funds received and spent for election campaigns. Election subjects shall make available to the auditor appointed by the CEC any information, documents or data relating to the election campaign financing and expenses. The CEC publishes the audit reports for electoral subjects no later than 30 days from the date of submission of the report or, where applicable, the date of the respective verifications. Names of persons donating amounts of not less than ALL 100 thousand and corresponding values are published together with the report.

- The CEC selects by competition a list of certified accounting experts at the beginning of the electoral year. The list must contain at least 20 experts who have practiced this profession in the past 5 years. Procedures, selection criteria of the preliminary list and their appointment are determined by a decision by the CEC. In any case, the same auditor cannot audit the same electoral subject for two consecutive elections.

SANCTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES DURING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS REGARDING ILLEGAL FINANCING AND UTILISATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

- Except for as otherwise provided by law, sources of public bodies or entities at the central or local government level, or any other entity the state owns assets or quotas in, or/and appoints the majority of the supervisory body, or of the body administering the entity, cannot be used or applied in support of candidates, political parties or coalitions in the elections, regardless of the source of capital or asset. Sources are the movable and immovable assets and any other human resource of the institution. Use of "human resources" means the people of the institutional administration used in the electoral campaign during working hours for electoral purposes, and the forced use or organization within teaching hours of the pre-university school system in the election campaign.
- Sources of financing of the campaign for electoral subjects are the funds provided in advance by the State Budget for the political parties registered as electoral subjects, the income of the electoral subject as established by law, donations in cash, in kind, or services rendered and loans taken by political parties according to the law.
- Hiring, dismissal, release, movement and transfer of office in public institutions or entities, unless otherwise justified, are prohibited during the electoral campaign. Justified cases are those where movement or release from office comes as a result of violations, in line with the provisions of the relevant legislation, or when hiring is done within the organizational structure in force before the electoral campaign by the certain public institution or entity in the fulfilment of its mission. Exception are cases of emergencies due to unforeseen events dictating recruitment.
- The Electoral Code provides that the violation of provisions for the political party financing by the person in charge of financing in the political party, or of the responsible person according to its Statute is sentenced with a fine of from ALL 50,000 to ALL 100,000. Violation of the obligation to cooperate with the certified accounting expert, as set by the Central Election Commission, by the political party is sentenced by a fine of from ALL 1,000,000 up to ALL 2,000,000. The refusal to make the political party financing sources transparent, or to allow an audit of the certified accounting expert from the Central Election Commission is sentenced with a fine of from ALL 2,000,000 up to ALL 5,000,000 or/and with the suspension of up to five years of public funding for the political party.
- Violation of the deadline of submission of the financial report in the proper time, or submission of the reports not in line with the standard formats as approved by the Central Election Commission, is punishable by a fine of from ALL 50,000 up to ALL 100,000. The non-public funds benefitted from the political party when the donor identity is not known, or is not clear, are transferred in

the account of the Central Elections Commission. The principle of the non-public funds with a value of over ALL 100,000 and when the transaction is not executed via the bank account is condemnable by fine in the amount of 30 % of the donated amount.

INDISPENSIBILITY OF POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING

- The Albanian model for political party financing is followed as an example from many other countries in the Balkan region and beyond. In view of fulfilling the needs for proper implementation of the constitutional law in the context of the political party financing, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania, in its Decision No. 28/2012 has stated that although the principle of the state financial support to political parties matters in a rule of law state, this, however, does not mean that it has no limits, it can not exceed an amount that respects the principle of separation of the political parties from the state.
- The Court considers that the financial support of the state may be restricted on the basis of contributions of political parties, assessing it in terms of the “seriousness of the efforts of competing parties” or “*seriousness of intentions of the electoral parties*” expressing a degree of their representation. The purpose of financing cannot be restriction of free competition, but it must ensure the seriousness of such competition. It is not an instrument for the integration of political parties, but simply a determinant of the fact whether election programs have had serious intentions, whether they are exclusively oriented towards success of the elections and not towards other purposes.
- In the context of the above decision, the Constitutional Court has seemed it fit to provide an explanation to clarify the fragile equilibrium between the need to finance political parties, on the one hand, and the seriousness of their activities, on the other hand, so as this funding be valid as a public good and serves the citizens. Political party financing in theory enables prevention of abusiveness of political activities with hidden funds, guarantees a fair and honest political competition, consolidates the confidence of voters to legal rules of transparency and impunity in abusive cases, and affirms the political parties as important factor of democracy through strengthening of integrity and fair practices of internal organization.
- According to modern theories of leadership and organization of political parties, financing of political parties is a necessary cost for strengthening and consolidating democracy. This form of financing with transparency and clear rules reduces the influence of illicit capital and illicit exchange of money with politics and, consequently, significantly reduces the phenomenon of corruption within the ranks of political parties.
- Through funding of political parties the state uses this role to ask political parties for changes or reforms in the political life and in other priority areas. In this case, public funding increases transparency, because it is subjected to the general rules and principles of public spending.
- In case of lack of public funding of political parties and when the latter are privately financed, economic inequality in society is reflected in political inequality in governance and in the electoral elections. Political parties and candidates, due to increased costs during campaigns, have a vital need of financial support. In the developing societies with high levels of poverty, the citizens do not possess sufficient opportunity to contribute to the financial support of political parties, therefore it is necessity for this role to fall on the state as a major regulator.

PROBLEMS RELATED TO POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING IN ALBANIA

- The phenomenon of inequalities between the political parties is evident particularly when the bigger parties, in some cases, are reported of using public vehicles and official buildings for campaign-related purposes, which is something prohibited by law. Several times the Government ceremonies were accompanied by the advertisement of the party in power, somehow obligating civil servants for attending. This has created confusion in determining clear lines between state

institutions and party interests, challenging even the international standards, according to OSCE⁴ reports. Regarding new parties, or independent candidates taking part for the first time in an election campaign, reports at the end of elections have identified a total lack of financial assistance from the state budget⁵.

- According to the election audits submitted to the CEC, high levels of unpaid expenses, particularly of political advertisement in TV broadcasts⁶ have been remarked. The other outcomes shown from the audit reports reflect the concern that expenses overcome the total income, while means are insufficient and expenses are unjustified⁷.
- Transparency of political party financing is covered by law, however, so far there have been weak administrative investigations and public authorities are based only on the data submitted by the parties, or by their self-declarations. In this respect, the sanctions provided for in the law are insignificant to apply full transparency and the will to implement them from the CEC is lacking due to the political influence.
- Political parties are considered as transparent by the law and have the explicit obligation to publish three reports, namely the annual financial report, the audit report of the certified auditing experts appointed by the CEC and the electoral campaign auditing report. The obligation to file these reports with the CEC is continuously considered as not respected by most of the political parties and a small number of them have met the legal provisions for generating all the reports.
- The audit reports for the election period are generally realised through formal procedures by almost all the parties, even by the independent candidates. However, despite their obligations for submission of reports to the CEC, the legal framework providing for this obligation does not provide for specific deadlines for submission by the political parties.
- The CEC is responsible for the publication of reports within 30 days from their submission, and implementation of such obligation is realised only through their publication in the official website of this institution. In the meantime, the political parties do not disclose their financial reports via information means and there is a lack of rules regarding the manner and deadlines of fulfilment of such transparency. This issue is also raised in the international reports, where the concern for the transparency of political parties has been related with their negligence in the process of public self-information⁸.
- In general, the CEC's website is easily accessible from the public regarding the financial statements declared by the political parties. However, those financial reports which have never been made public in CEC's website or in bulletins (*hard copy*) due to delays or other bureaucratic procedures. In this respect, official efforts of the CEC to take measures for their latter publication, or for measures of an administrative character against certain political entities are not identified.
- The practice regarding donations and support funds coming from private individuals or other subjects has improved due to efforts of political parties to fully reflect the generalities and amounts of donations in their official bank accounts. However, dual authenticity of declarations and funds hidden by only donators who avoid further confrontations with audits continues being a problem. This includes in-kind donations that are not included in the financial statements of political parties too.
- Even though financial reports include additional detailed information over donations, such as the name of donors, date and amount of each donation, copies of bills for each expense, date and amount of expenses and name and number of registration for each official seller, in practice

⁴OSCE/ODIHR 2013 Election Observation Mission Final Report, Albania, page 2: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/106963?download=true>

⁵ CSCE/OSCE 1990 Copenhagen Document, paragraph 5.4: <http://ëëë.osce.org/odihr/elections/14304?download=true>

⁶ Audit Reports of PS and PR: http://www.cec.org.al/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=368%3Araportet-e-auditimit-te-subjekteve&catid=131%3Afinancimi-i-subjekteve&Itemid=323&lang=sq

⁷ Audit Report SMI: http://www.cec.org.al/images/stories/zgjedhje-per-kuvend/2013/rap_audit/LSI.pdf

⁸ Transparency International Albania, CRINIS report, "Buying Influence: Money and Political Parties in Albania"; page 19: http://www.transparency.org/files/content/feature/2013_CRINIS_Albania_EN.pdf

irregularities are never reported to have been further accompanied with sanctions⁹.

- Even though the CEC has a supervisory role, including sanctions and publicity of all the reports of political subjects regarding their activity within 30 days from their submission, the law provides for no deadline for submission of statements. Such gap has created confusion regarding concrete legal procedures of treatment of delays and sanctions against political parties.
- However, the Constitutional Court decided to exclude the High State Audit from the control of financial activities of the political parties, leaving such competence to the CEC, while the latter has not shown full capacity to ensure regularity of financial reports and their control, even in a pro-active manner. This passiveness is implied even due to the CEC composition with representatives of the major political forces, which, in their stances favour the political parties they represent.
- The European Commission has expressed concerns regarding the political party financing, suggesting that the CEC needs considerable inspections, going beyond a simply formal approach to control the political party statements and by imposing clear responsibilities over the political party finance supervision¹⁰.

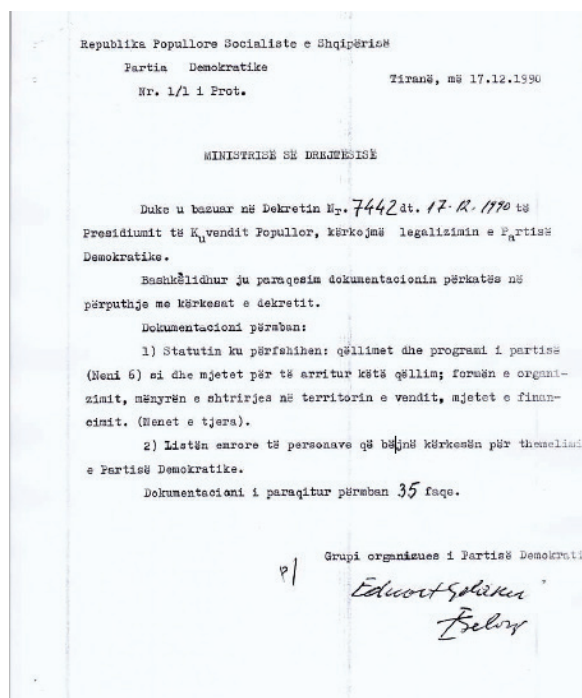
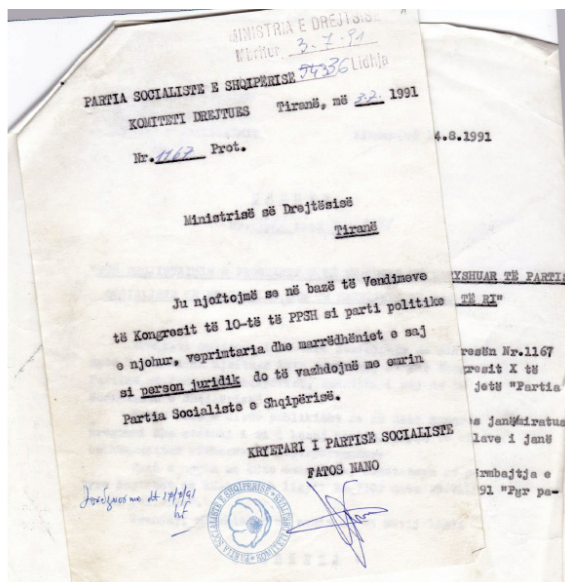
⁹ Transparency International Albania, 2013 CRINIS report, "Buying Influence: Money and Political Parties in Albania"; pages 17, 21: http://www.transparency.org/files/content/feature/2013_CRINIS_Albania_EN.pdf

¹⁰ European Commission, 2014 Progress Report, Albania, page 44: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-albania-progress-report_en.pdf



ANNEXES

ACTS OF ESTABLISHMENT OF MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES





ANNEX

POLITIKE.AL DATABASE, A NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE PUBLIC LIFE



The www.politike.al database, has since April 2016 been the only online portal at the disposal of scholars and professors of political sciences, providing complete and updated information on the history, decision-making, and internal party democracy in the political parties in the country. This portal has served to the political parties, encouraging them to be more transparent and careful in updating their acts, budget and decision-making.

From April to December, the website was visited by about 2000 visitors, while 62 persons are subscribed in the portal to receive notifications on the latest developments and our periodic reports.

The politike.al reports and comments of experts on the study findings are published on a quarterly basis in well-known national media.









NJË VIT I BRISHTË PËR DEMOKRACINË NË PARTITË POLITIKE

RAPORT VJETOR - 2016

Afrim Krasniqi

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**

ISP
INSTITUTI I STUDIMEVE POLITIKE
INSTITUTE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
www.isp.com.al