



Social Policies

in Political Party Programs: **Does Equality Matter?**

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SUMMARY

In order to describe a decade-long disregard of political parties towards social issues and marginalized groups in general, IKS brings forth this concise analysis that focuses both on the space dedicated by political parties /coalitions to social issues in their programs, as well as, on the quality of the offers made. The newest country in Europe provides little social protection for its people and the state falls short in addressing even the basic needs of marginalized groups. While billions of Euros are spent in individual infrastructure projects, little intent to upgrade the social protection system is shown by any of the main parties in the political spectrum.

The political programs of three frontrunners in the last national election—PAN, LVV, and LAA are analyzed in this report through a critical lens, thus enabling distinction between fact and fiction within political parties promises. The institutional memory within IKS team also enables easy evidencing of past behavior, which is also taken into account when assessing the viability of the proposed solutions. Through a mix of qualitative instruments and methods, Interviews with key informants from each of the parties covered have also been administered to cover for aspects/areas not presented in

written programs of parties.

Both the quantitative analysis (in terms of number of references made towards individual social categories/groups) and the analysis of quality of those references/pledges, of three biggest political blocs in the 2017 national elections, reveal that parties give relatively low priority to social policies. They all fail to provide a comprehensive social program that is intended to cater to the needs of the population for which it is intended. Overall, the research shows that little change can be expected from the current political approaches in terms of more comprehensive social policies and greater protection for more vulnerable groups. The political pledges made by all parties/coalitions monitored during the election period, in most cases are not well-conceptualized, provide very little innovation, and/or are not implementable in the foreseeable future in Kosovo.

In less than 200 days of governance, PAN Coalition, has effectively opposed the raise in minimum salary level proposed by Social Economic Council, voted against the amendment enabling equal access to children with special needs, and gave itself an illegal raise. It furthermore relentlessly pardoned around Mil. 60

EUR of debt that private companies owed to public companies and has paid an inflated resettlement cost for the new coal extraction field. The PAN Coalition (and its members) have been part of all government coalitions since the establishment of provisional institutions of self-governance under UNMIK, with PDK as its main party being part of every government since the declaration of independence in 2008. The electoral promises presented by PAN coalition cannot be treated seriously in the light of their past performance, while its electoral program couldn't be found online or in any other form accessible for public. The shift from complete discontent into the situation projected through their electoral promise is highly unrealistic to expect. The cost of some of the promises made surpass budgetary potential of Kosovo several fold. Given that, its members are largely to blame for the lack of attention to social policies until present, little change is to be expected from them in the future as well.

The LAA Coalition, representing some of the most conservative and neo-liberal positions, does not represent, either in terms of time and attention spent, nor the quality of solutions provided, a better alternative to PAN. The access to

LAA program was limited, considering its online non availability and its distribution of brochures only to a limited number of people. They too have shown in the past that it is inclined to reduce coverage of social risks instead of upgrading it. The electoral program showed little to no improvement from their past performance in practice, since LDK managed social welfare in previous government coalition. The conservative approach to social schemes is to be expected in the future from LDK, in case it maintains the current discourse.

LVV, as the only clearly defined leftist party and the only party with public access to its electoral program, shows little focus on the categories it is supposed to represent. As the other alternative in the spectrum, LVV fails to target specific sub-segments within the vulnerable population, and consequently, also falls short in effectively offering feasible and need-based solutions for the vulnerable categories in the society. Instead of proposing concrete solutions to specific concerns for each of the vulnerable categories, LVV presents overall systemic reform that in the best case scenario would take decades to show real effect, if it would be possible/feasible altogether. Furthermore, its measured proposed

have significant financial burden attached to them and cannot be sustained by the current Kosovo budget, making this way the LVV solutions and pragmatic offer quite unrealistic and populist. LVV

With such negligence on the part of political parties and lack of coherent demand voiced by the vulnerable groups, it remains that the media and civil society to be seen as the

only viable alternatives to advocating greater social justice and welfare. CSOs and media need to create a unified front in forwarding the social agenda, impose social policies on the political and legislative agenda. Awareness raising and education of voters is also very much needed to instill accountability in political parties and generate their response with more comprehensive social policies.

1.1 Research Background

Despite hundreds of millions of Euros being spent for social policies each year, poverty remains one of the biggest challenges for Kosovo to overcome. The World Bank data on Kosovo indicate that an estimated 29% of its inhabitants live on the poverty line with less than 1.72 euro per day. The most financially disadvantaged segments of the society include persons with special needs, financially vulnerable communities (especially Roma), the elderly, and women. Voters have failed to demand greater welfare, and thus political parties have also fallen short to provide solutions for their challenges. Welfare state in Kosovo is nearly inexistent, and most vulnerable segments of society are unprotected. The public healthcare system, especially tertiary healthcare is on the verge of collapse. The only benefit that elderly enjoy, comes in the form of basic old age pension, that does not suffice to cover their basic personal needs.

The main objective of this research is to educate political parties and the public on the importance of social policies. The focus on political party programs seeks to generate twofold results. On one hand, it aims at inducing response by the political parties in preparing more comprehensive social policies'

offers, but also motivating the general public to demand accountability from political parties and greater social protection. The research exercise subject to this report was carried out by applying a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods among which:

1. Desk research

- a. ➤ Comparative Analyses of written Political Party programs. This method served to distinguish between programs of political parties in Kosovo. A theoretical review of topics covered including the review of different academic sources was also carried out as part of the desk research. Review of relevant reports and previous analyses as well as review of legal and institutional infrastructure was also part of the desk research activities.
- b. ➤ Political party behavior and track record in relation to political decisions in the Parliament and the Government (test platform consistency, ideological consistency, etc) has been the second aspect of desk research. Review of concept documents, media reports, and other available online sources have all been used to cross-check political party platforms with their actual behavior in practice.

2. Interviews

Aside from targeting political parties, the research also aims at raising the awareness of the general public/voters and increasing the transparency of political parties and their programs. The programmatic and discourse analyses presented in this report provides an overview of thought and practice within bigger political parties in Kosovo. It debunks their proclaimed attitudes, discourse and positions towards social issues. It has been prepared by IKS, as part of its contribution to the work of Social Justice Coalition, which represents a civil society joint front on advancing social justice in Kosovo.

The research subject to this report dwells into the most recent practices of political parties and their observed behavior in the last national and local election, while using this information to position political parties' attitudes and values vis-à-vis social issues and policies. Aside from frequency of use and how often politicians made reference to social issues, the context in which they were used and the discourse proposed to solve these issues has also been analyzed. As such, the report provides for a unique analysis that

evidences the hierarchy of priorities of political parties, as well as, their proposed solutions to the problems identified/noted during the campaigns. It aims at presenting an objective analyses of priority issues raised by political parties during the election campaign and solutions proposed by political parties (where that was the case).

1.2 Background to Social Policies and Political Parties

One of the primary reasons behind commencing the research subject to this report, was the lenience of political parties to respond to social pressures that have been continuously increasing in intensity. The political parties in Kosovo, since the takeover of competencies from the UNMIK administration, have shown little interest in advancing social protection, services or welfare. Despite being among the first competencies to be transferred into the hands of local decision-makers, social welfare system in Kosovo is one of the least developed in Europe. Social protection in Kosovo accounts for few social services and cash benefits. The low level of active participation in the labour market has made it rather difficult in developing universal coverage against social and economic risks generally covered in other countries. Although it is supposed to address social risks of one of the poorest countries in Europe, the social protection system in Kosovo is founded on neo-liberal principles of limited interference of the state and little protection for the least fortunate in the society. Kosovo is the only country in Europe that does not have a public health insurance system. There are also no unemployment benefits; instead, the government has been supported by numerous donors to

institute Active Labour Market Measures, to match the supply and demand between employers and job-seekers. As such, Active Labour Market instruments are seen as complementary measure to ensuring better lives of citizens through increased employment and income derived from work, rather than cash benefits provided by the state. Old age is another risk that is covered by state-funded pension schemes, through the Old Age Pension Scheme, which is the first pillar or pensions' system in Kosovo. Even regarding this risk, there have been attempts to reduce its coverage and completely eliminate the universal coverage introduced through the Basic Pension Scheme¹.

Social assistance is the only cash-based scheme targeting the financial vulnerability of Kosovars. Social assistance is awarded to households and not individuals, and it entails a lengthy list of criteria that given households need to fulfil to be eligible for receiving assistance. CSOs have often argued against the criteria applied for determining eligibility of benefit from social assistance scheme and have considered them discriminatory (i.e. having a child under the age of five² or a senior person over 65 years of age).

¹ The past government has formally initiated a process to change the Law on state-funded pension schemes, but the process was halted due to civil society and EU pressure.

² Having a child under the age of 5 in the household is one of the criteria applied, and it has been often argued that it is the primary cause for the large number of children among households that receive social assistance.

Discrimination against individuals and groups has also been reported by CSOs and the media, particularly related to age, race, and gender discrimination. Antidiscrimination protection introduced both at the level of the Constitution, as well as, at law level, clearly prohibits any form of discrimination and foresees combat measures, yet, such discrimination is broadly encountered in Kosovo. Gender-Discrimination is most frequently encountered in job announcements (i.e. specification of gender for the job opening), and/or termination of contracts to working pregnant women. Age discrimination is also an often-encountered form of discrimination in Kosovo. Racial discrimination is also frequently reported. The most discriminated against on grounds of race are Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, which also represent the least employed ethnic communities in Kosovo.

The 2017 elections in Kosovo both at the local and central level were considered fair and democratic, despite being almost exclusively male elections. While technically they satisfied the criteria and standards, in practice, women candidates in them were given little to no space to present themselves and their ideas. Women candidates

were given very little space during campaign, and only a handful of women within each of the coalitions were offered space in the bigger electoral events. Consequently, the current government cabinet that accounts for almost 100 ministers and deputy ministers accounts for less than 5% women. Large coalitions in the early national elections had adverse effects on women in the electoral race. At best, the election processes can be considered Half Democratic, thus reflecting the application of democratic standards and practices only for the half of population (men), but not of the other half (women).

2.1 General Overview of Practice

Most political parties and politicians in Kosovo seldom refer to social issues and seek/propose solutions to resolve them. All political parties have seen employment and economic development as the only solution to improving the welfare of Kosovars. Consequently, very little discussion takes place about social policies and they are generally viewed as being of secondary importance compared to 'high politics' topics, in which parties readily engage. The 'big issues'³ to which significant amount of emotional and patriotic sentiment is attached, have been the reason for the early national election in 2017. The sensitivity of these topics and importance it has been given by the media, have overshadowed any other initiative and or process.

Even when social issues reach the top of the agenda and are discussed either in the media or by politicians, most of the energy is spent on the problems rather than proposing solutions for them. Governments usually blame their predecessors about the state of affairs in the social protection system, but show little effort in further developing the system when they get the chance to do so. The most recent decision of the current government coalition to increase the salaries of top executives in the government

cabinet, but not increase the minimum salary from 170 EUR/month into 250 EUR/month, testifies to the lack of sensitivity of decision-makers on more vulnerable segments of the population, and illustrate the general disregard for social cohesion that has underlined Kosovo politics throughout the post-war period.

Even if voting practices of political parties in the parliament are analyzed, most frequently they are leaning towards the ideological right. Often, parties with proclaimed center-left orientation, also often vote contrary to their ideological orientation. Most of the voting practices in the parliament are done en-bloc, with MPs usually following the party recommendation/position on the issue. The latter is usually based on the daily priorities of small groups of decision-makers, and is usually based on arithmetic calculations of probability for bills to pass. Their position has been pragmatic rather than ideologically motivated and very few decisions / laws / initiatives diverge from this general rule. One social policy that recently failed to pass a vote in the Kosovo Assembly also testifies to this complete disregard of social policies. It relates to children with special needs, whereby, for a tag price of around 700,000 EUR, the

³Such as, the process of discussion with Belgrade and Demarcation of Borderline with Montenegro.

law was not passed, denying hundreds of children with special needs, quality education in the public schools. Most of the recently initiated reforms of social policies were aimed at reducing the burden on the state budget rather than improving the quality and/or coverage of risks. Pension reform was initiated with the objective to reduce budget for the scheme, while completely disregarding over 80% of women in Kosovo⁴, is an example of such practice. Similarly, the reform of the Labor law with the aim of reducing the coverage and benefits of maternity leave, also illustrates the Kosovo policy-makers' approach towards social policy reform.

2.1.1. General Overview of Practice

The first aspect analyzed in this report is the frequency with which political parties refer/note social issues and concepts. To this end, IKS has monitored the number of times that both topics and marginalized groups are referred to in political party programs and public appearances of party representatives. The target groups covered by this monitoring exercise include: Elderly, Women, Children, Persons with Special Needs, the Poor, Unemployed, and war-related social categories. These groups often

intersect providing for increased vulnerability of some segments of the population, but generally, these categories represent the biggest part of Kosovo population⁵. Despite representing the majority of the population in terms of numbers, they account for very low priority for politicians and political parties.

With regards to the elderly, some of the terms that the monitoring and analyses covered include: old people; over 65 years of age; pensioners, elderly, work experience. These terms are the most frequently used to describe the senior citizen's category and policies tailored to suit their needs. To this end, the PAN coalition has been most attentive to this target audience, making a total of nine references to the elderly category. The second ranked according to the intensity/number of references towards the elderly is LVV with a total of three references, while LAA coalition ranks last with only one reference made regarding this social category.

Table 1. Number of references to the Elderly

#	Political Party/Coalition	Number of references ⁶
1	LDK, AKR and Alternativa (LAA)	1
2	Levizja Vetevendosje! (LVV)	3
3	PDK, AAK, and Nisma (PAN)	9

⁴Women participation in the labor market is below 20%, thus removal of universal coverage of basic pension and introducing needs based criteria, would directly affect all non-working women that currently benefit from this scheme.

⁵i.e. women represent 50% of population. Children represent around 20% of the population. Elderly over 65 years of age represent around 5% of population. Over 20% of Kosovars is considered poor. Around 10% of the population is estimated to be persons with special needs.

⁶Total number of references of all sub-categories of women.

The second category of persons covered in the analyses are women. The specific terms analyzed and monitored include: mothers; girls; women; maternity for employed mothers; maternity for unemployed mothers; single mothers; domestic violence; and young mothers. To this end, PAN does not make any references to mothers, while LVV and LAA made one reference each to mothers in their electoral offer. Young girls are noted as a category only by LVV, while LAA makes one reference to female workers. All three parties make multiple references to women in their programs, namely LVV and LAA with three times each, while PAN makes nine different references to this category. LVV does not make any references to women on maternity, LAA makes one, while PDK makes seven references to them, while LAA also makes one reference to working women on maternity leave. PAN and LDK make one reference each to domestic violence, while LVV does not cover this topic. Single mothers are another category of women that the monitoring and analyses took into consideration. Regarding this sub-group of women, only LVV makes one reference, while LAA and PAN make no comments on this target audience.

Table 2. Number of references to Women

#	Political Party/Coalition	Number of references ⁶
1	LDK, AKR and Alternativa (LAA)	8
2	Levizja Vetevendosje! (LVV)	9
3	PDK, AAK, and Nisma (PAN)	17

The third category that the monitoring focused was children. This vulnerable category appears in many forms and variations, is linked to many issues and includes many sub-groups. Within the category of children, monitoring paid specific attention to more vulnerable categories of children like children without parental care, children with special needs, victims of domestic violence, pupils, working street children, orphans, children with limited opportunities. Political parties make a number of references to these sub-categories of vulnerable children and propose different approaches towards them. To this end, LVV makes six references to different groups of vulnerable children. PAN Coalition in its program makes twenty references to children, while LAA Coalition makes only two references to children. Table 3 makes an overview of total references in political party programs made to children.

Table 3. Number of references to Children

#	Political Party/Coalition	Number of references ⁶
1	LDK, AKR and Alternativa (LAA)	2
2	Levizja Vetevendosje! (LVV)	6
3	PDK, AAK, and Nisma (PAN)	20

The forth category covered in the analysis is that of persons with special needs. The two sub-categories included within this group are persons with special needs (physical and mental impairments) as well as, children with asocial behavior. To this end, the LAA coalition makes no specific mentions to this category of persons, while LVV makes only one such reference. PAN Coalition leads this category with a total of three references made to persons with special needs.

Table 4. Number of references to Persons with Special Needs

#	Political Party/Coalition	Number of references ⁶
1	LDK, AKR and Alternativa (LAA)	0
2	Levizja Vetevendosje! (LVV)	1
3	PDK, AAK, and Nisma (PAN)	3

Fifth category included in the monitoring represents the most financially disadvantaged groups in the society. The poor as per the definition of international organizations, are persons living with less than 1 USD / day. Within the exercise, the team differentiated /paid particular attention to socially marginalized and recipients of social assistance benefits. To this end, LVV is the only party/coalition that does not specifically make reference to the Poor, despite being a proclaimed center-left party. PAN coalition made a total of two references to the poor and poverty, while LAA coalition made six such references in its program. Table 5 below, provides an overview of the total number of references made by political parties in their programs to the poor and poverty.

Table 5. Number of references to the Poor

#	Political Party/Coalition	Number of references ⁶
1	LDK, AKR and Alternativa (LAA)	6
2	Levizja Vetevendosje! (LVV)	0
3	PDK, AAK, and Nisma (PAN)	2

The sixth category covered in the analysis were the unemployed. While unemployment is agreed upon to be one of the top priorities for all politicians and institutional leaders, it does not necessarily appear so also in their programs. The three specific sub-categories/topics within the unemployed that analysis noted were youth; former employees of social enterprises; and employment. LVV as the only proclaimed center-left makes the least number of references to the topic of unemployment and to the category of unemployed persons with only three such references being identified within its program. LAA coalition made a total of nine such references. The champion on the topic is the PAN coalition, which has made a total of twenty nine references to unemployment/unemployed.

Table 6. Number of references to the Unemployed

#	Political Party/Coalition	Number of references ⁶
1	LDK, AKR and Alternativa (LAA)	9
2	Levizja Vetevendosje! (LVV)	3
3	PDK, AAK, and Nisma (PAN)	29

2.1.2. Proposed Policies and Measures for Social Issues and Categories

Aside from frequency of referring to social issues and policies, as well as, resolution of problems for socially vulnerable categories, the monitoring and analyses also covered the content/nature of their coverage. The solutions to problems were identified within more socially excluded and vulnerable categories. The number of references noted above will be elaborated qualitatively in this section, to depict the concrete measures proposed by political parties/coalitions in their electoral offer.

The content/discourse analysis of political party programs provides for an interesting overview of ideas, concepts and approaches provided by political parties in response to challenges identified with regards to social policies. To this end, the qualitative aspect of monitoring also focused on the specific vulnerable groups and categories for which quantitative analyses is presented above. The target groups covered by this monitoring exercise include: Elderly, Women, Children, Persons with Special Needs, the Poor, Unemployed, and war-related social categories.

2.2. Election Program 2017

2.2.1. LDK-AKR-Alternativa (LAA) Coalition

With regards to the elderly, some of the terms that the monitoring and analyses covered include: old people; over 65 years of age; pensioners, elderly, work experience. These terms are the most frequently used to describe the senior citizen's category and policies tailored to suit their needs. To this end the LAA coalition, which ranked last in the quantitative ranking of references made to this category, also is not assessed to be attentive towards this target audience in terms of the quality of response. The only reference made to the elderly by the LAA coalition regards the reorganization of social protection and pensions schemes. If one analyses in retrospect, during the last term of the government when LDK ran the MLSW, the reforms proposed, were in fact negative for the elderly, stripping most of them off the basic pension (first pillar benefits), through transforming it into a need-based scheme for elderly.

The second category of persons covered in the analyses are women and the specific terms monitored include: mothers; girls; women; maternity for employed mothers; maternity for unemployed mothers; single mothers; domestic violence; and young mothers. To this end, some of the proposals catering the

needs of women within LAA political offer include the construction of the Center for Mother and Child; Funding Schemes for businesses, with specific quota for women and marginalized groups; Quota for women in agriculture subsidies and grants; 12-month paid maternity leave for working mothers and 12-month maternity payments for unemployed mothers set at 50% of minimum salary; another reference made by LAA concerns victims of domestic violence, whereby their adequate treatment is sought through local government and CSOs certified/licensed for this purpose by MLSW.

With regards to children, as one of the most vulnerable categories, LAA coalition makes only two brief references to different categories of children. To this end, the only specific action identified during monitoring is the one made regarding children without parental care, for which financial support is the only measure proposed/noted.

The forth category covered in the qualitative analysis is that of persons with special needs. The LAA coalition makes no specific mentions to this category of persons in their program or solutions to address their needs.

Fifth category included in the monitoring represents the most financially disadvantaged- the poor. To this end, LAA coalition made six references citations to this group within its program. Ensuring sustainable social protection is the first reference/measure proposed to cater to the needs of this target group. Functionalizing Centers for Social Work through increase in staff and budget, is another reference/measure proposed by LAA coalition to address the needs and challenges of the poor. Another reference identified is expressed at the level of an objective, with it being formulated as “continuous decreasing of poverty”.

The sixth category covered in the analysis were the unemployed. While unemployment is agreed upon to be one of the top priorities for all politicians and institutional leaders, it does not necessarily appear so also in their programs. LAA coalition made a total of nine references to unemployment and the unemployed as a category. The first mention comes as an electoral promise/objective and is formulated as unemployment reduced to single digit percentages within four-six years. LAA coalition has also presented its plan one employed for each household, through which it intends to reduce unemployment (at

least partially). LAA also promised particular attention to workers affected from privatization of former socially owned enterprises. Another measure proposed by LAA Coalition is development of active social policies that promote entrepreneurship and self-employment with the objective of reducing the dependency on social schemes.

Given that LDK has governed with the MLSW, the 'rather light' content in terms of social policies can only be interpreted as lack of attention towards social policies, and not based on lack of information on the sector. Furthermore, some of the objectives/references set forth in their programmatic offer contradict one-another in terms of approach and are counter-productive to their stated objectives. Claiming to improve the situation of the elderly through reform of the pension schemes is an oxymoron, as in practice, LDK attempted the decapitation of one of the three pillars of the pension scheme. Through introducing need-based criteria for the Basic Pension Scheme⁷, LDK attempted to remove the benefits for the vast majority of Kosovars from this scheme. As such, the programmatic reference made the reform of the pension system can only be understood as the intent

⁷Basic pension scheme is universal old-age pension, awarded to all Kosovo citizens, regardless of their employment history, financial situation, or income.

to strip-off Kosovars from the only cash benefit dedicated to protecting them from the risk of old age, making them even more vulnerable. Given that the second pillar of the pension scheme—The Pensions Savings Trust, is independently managed savings fund, which is invested in international markets that is not guaranteed by the government, the vulnerability of Kosovars would significantly increase with the reforms of the basic pension scheme.

2.2.2. Levizja Vetevendosje! (LVV)

Levizja Vetevendosje! is the only political party with proclaimed leftist orientation and it has also often been labeled by its adversaries and media analysts as communists. When it comes to social policies and addressing the needs of marginalized groups in many instances it scores lower than the two other coalitions analyzed in this report.

With regards to the elderly, by definition they are considered as persons over the age of 65, which according to the Kosovo law is the retirement age for both men and women. With regards to the elderly LVV has made only one concrete promise/measure and that is that within its first mandate it would

increase Basic Pensions⁸ to 150 EUR/month, while the promised increase of the work-related pensions⁹ to 280 EUR/month.

The second category of persons covered in the analyses are women. A specific reference that LVV made towards women in its programmatic offer includes the establishment of social housing fund where priority would be given to women applicants. Further to that, LVV stated that with the objective of reducing the burden on women and all workers, enforce a five-day work week for all non-managerial employees, probably one of the most meaningful measures proposed by LVV regarding women is construction of 160 new kindergartens in cooperation with municipalities. This would address one of the biggest challenges to women employment (child care), as well as, open numerous opportunities for employment of women in these kindergartens. Children of single mothers have been stated to be given priority within the new kindergartens program.

Regarding the third category –that of children, LVV makes six references to different groups of vulnerable children. Some of the concrete measures proposed by LVV regarding policies geared towards alleviating the position of more

⁸Basic Pension Scheme is universal in coverage and is entirely state funded and based on the Law on Pensions.

⁹Work-related pensions are a temporary scheme introduced with a government decision and could be revoked at any point in time through a similar measure (government decision). It is awarded to persons that have worked/actively contributed in the past system, the number of which decreases by the year.

vulnerable children include child benefits of 10 EUR/month for all children under the age of fifteen. Another measure proposed by LVV concerns food in schools, whereby free food is intended for all pupils in the grades one–five, with the intent of also expanding the food service to all pupils. It should be noted that all these three measures are universal in the nature of coverage, and apply horizontally to all children regardless of social or economic status. While their intended impact will be visible/measurable only with the more financially vulnerable situation, they are not geared to address specific needs of specific sub-groups within the overall category of children.

The fourth category covered in the exercise is that of persons with special needs. To this end, the LVV has made only one brief remark about persons with special needs. A similar situation is also recorded with regards to the fifth category of persons included in the monitoring – the poor. LVV is the only party/coalition that does not specifically make reference to the Poor, despite being a proclaimed center–left party and proposing social policies geared towards the poor (i.e. measures proposed for children). The only concrete measure to alleviate the situation of low

income population proposed by LVV has been the reform of the progressive income tax and the reform of the corporate tax system.

With regards to unemployment and the unemployed, LVV, makes the least number of references to the topic as compared to other coalitions analyzed. The first measure proposed by LVV are the establishment of Sovereign Fund of Republic of Kosovo, Kosovo Development Agency, and Development Bank of Kosovo. While little detail is provided on the functioning and financing of these institutions, they provide for the overall development framework that LVV proposes to address the unemployment challenge. An additional measure proposed by LVV, which falls more into the realm of political rights rather than economic rights is lowering the voting age to sixteen years. Given the widespread support that LVV enjoys primarily among youth, such promise could be perceived as an intent to boost its political power, rather than a measure having a direct impact on youth.

2.2.3. PDK-AAK-Nisma (PAN) Coalition

Aside from the three political parties derived from the last war¹⁰, the PAN Coalition also included a number of smaller parties, and as a consequence emerged as the first-ranking coalition in the early national election that took place in June 2017. The loose coalition, whose primary aim was to emerge as victors in the last election, was based largely on personal interests of these parties' leaderships. Seen as desperate attempt on the part of PDK to retain governing power, the coalition is believed to have significantly damaged its members. Seen as former adversaries and in the case of Nisma, direct opponents with PDK, the voters of coalition members did not respond well to this alliance, which resulted in the marginal victory in the election. Individually, all coalition members have fewer MPs than in the former legislature.

Programmatically, the PAN Coalition was vague and did not present a coherent programmatic offer. It should be noted, that in most public appearances and debates, PAN coalition was represented by PDK representatives¹¹. However, in its best attempt to capture the aspects pertaining to the categories analyzed in this paper, IKS managed to identify some of the issues brought forth/addressed during their

campaign appearances.

The first aspect analyzed – the elderly, the PAN Coalition made most references to the senior citizen categories, with a total of nine references to this category. Among the electoral promises made, PAN coalition pledged a 30% increase of pensions; recognition of work experience from the 90s; creating legal conditions of work beyond the legal retirement age; new policies on elderly without family care; signing bilateral agreements on pensions with countries where Kosovars have earned their work-related pension rights; and advances to all pension schemes, inclusive of: basic pension, contributive pensions (work-related), pensions for persons with special needs, "Trepça" pensions, Former TMK pensions, and FSK pensions. While these pledges represent the most attention given by any of the parties/coalitions, it also appears to be without any sound budgeting and planning, and the promised changes would not be possible within the current Kosovo budget.

The second category of persons covered in the analyses are women. To this end, PAN made several references to different categories of women inclusive of establishment of the Fund for Support to Youth and Women; Establishment of the Gender

¹⁰Parties which are led by commanders of the Former Kosovo Liberation Army

¹¹Media based on applicable laws of covering elections, were inviting representation from coalitions (instead of parties), which in turn gave little space to PDK's coalition partners.

Equality Fund and allocation of Mil. 20 EUR as Credit Guarantee for women startups, and implementation of various capacity development programs for women; affirmative action in tax policies for: a) businesses that employ women; and b) businesses founded/managed by women; and recognition of Nanny profession followed by certification of 300 women in this profession within four-year period. Other electoral promises made by the PAN coalition include reduction of maternity leave costs for businesses for 50% through subsidizing temporary replacement staffs. PAN Coalition also pledged to consider new policies for empowering and further supporting the shelter and protection of victims of domestic violence.

With regards to the third category monitored-children, PAN Coalition in its programmatic offer made twenty references. Among the major promises that concern children were the establishment and functionalizing of Early Childhood Program; construction of 300 kindergartens and achieve the average of one kindergarten for each 1000 citizens; support to Diaspora children; Program for Minors' Care and increased inspection for working children without parental care.

The fourth category covered in the exercise is that of persons with special needs. Similar to other categories, PAN Coalition leads in this category in terms of the times it has made reference, with a total of three references made to persons with special needs. Most notably, PAN Coalition proposed increased institutional residential care for persons with mental conditions in Special Institute in Shtime; and advancement of the scheme supporting households with Children aged 1-18 years old that have permanent disability.

With regards to the fifth category monitored-financially challenged persons, PAN coalition made a total of two references to the poor and poverty. The first reference made was reducing migration from rural areas and reduction of poverty through job creation stemming from support to diversification of agriculture activity. The second reference to the poorest in the society comes in terms of the promise to raise the Social Assistance benefits for its recipients.

The sixth category covered in the analysis were the unemployed. The champion on the topic is the PAN coalition, which has made a total of twenty-nine references to unemployment/unemployed.

Subsidies for Internship Programs at 50 EUR through which 5,000 students have been promised to gain practical work experience was among the electoral pledges of the PAN Coalition. Other solutions proposed by PAN Coalition to reduce unemployment include: creation of 60 K of new jobs through concrete Action Plan and implementation of 40 investment projects; Establishment of National Volunteer Service whereby volunteerism would be legally recognized as work experience and public service would be paid by the government minimum salary; Equity Fund for youth-owned SMEs; Youth Card for persons up to 26 years old that exempts youth from public service payments; job creation in the ICT sector through tax breaks for employment; Construction of an Oil Refinery through PPP in Prizren and attracting Mil. 400 EUR investment and creating over one thousand jobs; tripling the number of jobs in the mining sector within four years with up to 40,000 employed;

3 CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

The arithmetic and content analyses of electoral offers of the three major political parties/coalitions in the 2017 national elections reveals the relatively low priority given by political parties to more vulnerable social categories. It also shows a clear lack of a functional and feasible plan on how to tackle issues of concern for the most vulnerable categories. Overall, it shows that little progress can be expected from the existing political parties in terms of more effectively catering to the needs of the least fortunate, and building a safety and support net around them. The political pledges made by all parties/coalitions monitored during the election period, in most cases are not well-conceptualized, provided for very little innovation, and/or are not implementable in Kosovo.

The LAA Coalition, representing some of the most conservative and neo-liberal positions, does not represent, either in terms of time and attention spent, nor the solutions provided, the most vulnerable categories in the society. Past experience shows the readiness of this party to reduce coverage of social risks (i.e. initiative to reform pension systems¹²) and the electoral program showed little to no improvement from their past performance. As LDK has managed

social welfare in the previous government coalition, and is acquainted with the situation, the negligence to social issues in its program can only be ascribed to the lack of sensitivity towards these issues. The conservative approach to social schemes is to be expected in the future from LDK, in case it maintains the current discourse.

The PAN Coalition (and its members) have been part of most government coalitions since the establishment of provisional institutions of self-governance under UNMIK. PDK as its main party has been part of every government since the declaration of independence in 2008. The current state of affairs and the poor social protection system could be largely attributed to PDK government and/or complete lack of interest towards social categories in our society. The MLSW was never assumed by PDK in any of the government coalitions it has taken part. Instead, it always reserved this ministry for Serbian minority partners in the government coalitions. The electoral promises presented by PAN coalition cannot be treated seriously in the light of their past performance. The shift from complete discontent into the situation projected through their electoral promise is highly unrealistic to expect. Furthermore, simple

¹²The Concept Document for the Pension Reform Initiated by LDK: http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/Koncept-dokumenti_per_rregullimin_e_fushes_se_pensioneve_MPMs.pdf

arithmetic calculations of electoral promises reveal the naiveté of some of the proposals made by PAN coalition.

LVV on the other hand, which is often described as the most leftist party in the Kosovo system, has never been part of central government. Anyhow, its electoral offer does not offer feasible and need-based solutions for the vulnerable categories in the society, being entrapped in the populist promises that most often cannot be sustained in the current Kosovo budget. Promises to raise pensions, and plans to construct hundreds of kindergartens are among such promises that are not founded on the realistic potential of Kosovo Budget. Child benefits of 10 EUR per month for every child under the age of fifteen, would further burden the state budget for around Mil. 2 EUR each month.¹³ Similarly, the housing fund, the investment fund, and other state-financed interventions proposed are impossible under the budgetary constraints that Kosovo government has. Furthermore, LVV fails to target specific sub-segments within the vulnerable population. Instead of proposing concrete solutions to specific concerns for each of the vulnerable categories, LVV presents overall systemic reform that in the best case

scenario would take decades to show real effect, if it would be possible/feasible altogether. For instance, instead of proposing the construction of 160 kindergartens (which would total at tens of millions of Euros to construct and additional tens millions of euros per year to maintain/operate), kindergarten services could be offered in cooperation with the private sector through adequate PPP models. Such approach would enable kindergarten services immediately, while easing the pressure for capital investments and the budget. Another instance of such approach is in its proposal for free meals in schools, which is highly unlikely to resolve nutrition issues of the poor, as the quality of such meals under budgetary constraints that Kosovo has would be rather low. The experience in Prishtina Municipality, where snacks are already provided in schools is evidence of how budgetary constraints impact the quality of meals provided.

The behavior of the newly elected parliament can also be considered as evidence that things are about to remain unchanged for socially vulnerable categories. The current legislature in one of the first voting rejected a bill/amendment that would enable 6,195 children with special needs equal access to education. The

¹³According to Kosovo Statistics Agency around 200K of children are estimated to be up to 15 years of age.

foreseen budget increase for 739K EUR was foreseen to compensate around 100 psychologists/pedagogues, and around 50 teaching assistants in elementary schools¹⁴. At the same time the governing coalition (which holds a one-vote majority in the Assembly) has passed a government decision to double the salaries of cabinet officials. The latter was deemed illegal by the Anticorruption Agency and in violation of the Law on Conflict of Interest.

Media and civil society have also been quite passive regarding social policies and welfare of the most vulnerable groups. Aside from a handful of member-based organizations representing vulnerable segments/groups, few CSOs have paid attention to these categories. The recently established Coalition for Social Justice is the first cross-sectoral partnership aimed at greater social justice that has succeeded in gathering a critical mass of organizations jointly contributing to these topics. Media, like CSOs, is mostly entrapped in disseminating protocol information and it falls short in voicing out the needs and priorities of the neediest and least fortunate. Instead of demanding greater social justice, media follows the lead of political parties and is most of the time

tangled in the twines of high politics, leaving little space for the daily hardship of the least fortunate.

¹⁴Media Report on the Assembly vote can be found at: <http://www.koha.net/arberi/65692/deputetet-refuzuan-te-perkrahin-6-mije-e-195-femije-me-nevoja-te-vecanta/>

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ANNEX 1. Index of Social Policies Terms used by Political Parties

Inclusion of Social Issues in Political Party Programs

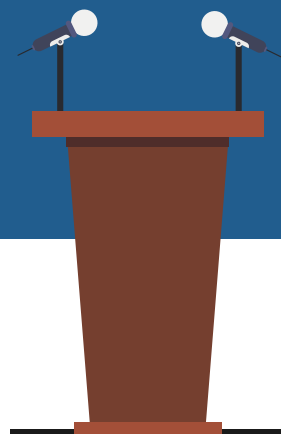
In general terms, political party programs in Kosovo are broad, but do not contain concrete solutions to the problems that are being made. Even in those cases when they have submitted a proposal, they are exaggerated and proved to have been made only for electoral campaigns.

The Kosovo Stability Initiative – IKS, a research in the framework of the "Social Inclusion in Political Party Programs" has conducted an analysis of the programs that political parties have competed in the 2017 parliamentary elections. Among other things, the expressions used describe categories and social issues.

Based on tabular data, we find that the categories of elderly people, women, children, persons with special needs, poverty, unemployment and war categories, these appear to be among the categories that some parties do not mention them at all.

While more specific categories, such as single mothers, are not found anywhere in the political party programs. In the same way, almost all political parties do not provided assistance to the unemployed mothers. Another important element highlighted in these graphs, is that the category of elderly people is never mentioned by political parties that are declared as left-wing and social-democrats. By contrast, the category of children and employment are mostly represented.

Most political party programs contain a description of the situation when they are drafted. To a minimum, the parties try to adhere to their ideological profile, but the way of assessing things makes them both left and right, both liberal and conservative.



No.	CATEGORIES	OTHER EXPRESSIONS	YEAR	POLITICAL PARTIES		
1	ELDERLIES	1. Old people 2. Over 65 years 3. Pensioners 4. Elderlies 5. Work experience (service period)	2017	VETËVENDOSJA	PAN PDK/AAK/NISMA	LAA LDK/AKR/ALT
				3	7	1
				1. By the end of the mandate, the basic pension will increase to € 150, the contributor € 280.	1. Pension increase for 30%. 2. Acceptance of work experience (service period) for the 90s period. 3. Creating conditions for working beyond the legal retirement age. 4. Creating new policies for the elderly without family care. 5. Signing of agreements in the area of pensions with the places where the citizens of Kosovo worked.	1. Reorganization of social protection and pension scheme
	WOMEN	1. Mothers		1	0	1
						1. Building the Center for Mother and Child.
		2. Females		0	0	1
						Creation of a financing scheme for businesses with a specific quota for women and marginalized groups.
		3. Women		4	9	3
				1. Creation of the Fund for the Support of Youth and Women. 2. Establish the Fund for Gender Equality and allocate € 20M for: Credit Guarantee; support ideas for Start-ups by Women, as well as the implementation of various women's qualification programs. 3. Creating special policies to provide tax relief for a) private businesses who employ women and b) businesses established and managed by women. 4. Recognizing the nanny as a profession by law - Certification of 300 nannies for 4 years.	1. Creation of a residential fund for affordable housing and social housing, where women will have high priority. 2. In order not to burden women and any employee, we will not allow to work more five days a week for non-managerial employees.	1. In agriculture, women will have special subsidies and grants.

CHILDREN	4. Women's who gave birth		0	7	2
				1. Reducing the cost of maternity leave for employers in two ways: subsidizing the substitute during maternity leave and reducing the cost of maternity by the employer in this format: arranging maternity leave.	1. Women who are on maternity leave and employed will receive 12 months of paid maternity leave. 2. Unemployed women (not qualified for Maternity Benefits/Allowance) will receive 50% of the minimum wage for 12 months.
	5. Domestic violence		0	1	1
				1. New policies that strengthen state support in sheltering and protecting victims of domestic violence will be considered.	1. Adequate treatment of victims of violence, through local governments and non-governmental organizations certified for this purpose.
	6.Single mothers		1	0	0
			Opening of 160 new kindergartens in cooperation with municipalities - A special priority in this program will be the children of single mothers.		
	1. Without care 2. Children with special needs 3. Victims of violence 4. Students 5. Education 6. Orphan children		6	20	2
			1. Supplements from € 10 per month for children under the age of 15. 2. Free meals for children in primary classes 1 to 5. 3. Planning and implementing food service for all students.	1. The construction and functioning of the Early Childhood Program. 2. 300 kindergartens, every 1000 inhabitants, one kindergarten. 3. Support for Diaspora children. 4. "Juvenile care program" and controls in the country to avoid having children who work and are abandoned. 5. "Internship wage subsidy". Within this program, 5,000 students will be supported with 50 euros.	1. Financial support for children without parental care.
			0	3	0
				1. Increase of 24-hour institutional care for persons with mental disabilities at the Special Institute in Shtime. 2. Support schemes for families who have children with permanent disabilities of 1 to 18 years of age will be advanced.	
	1. People with special needs				
1. Social cases 2. Marginalized groups		1	2	6	
		1. Progressive Reform of Income Tax and Tax Reform for Corporations.	1. Reducing migration and reducing poverty in rural areas, new job opportunities will be created in those areas, supporting diversification of agricultural activities. 2. Social assistance will be increased for families in need in the Social Assistance Scheme.	1Functioning of Centers for Social Work through staff and budget increase.	

2

UNEMPLOYED

1. Employment
2. Former employees of public and socially owned enterprises
3. Young people

3

War Categories

1. War invalids
2. War veterans
3. Martyrs' families

3	29	9
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The creation of the Sovereign Fund of the Republic of Kosovo, the Kosovo Development Agency and the Development Bank of the Republic of Kosovo. 2. Young men and women from the age of 16 will be given the right to vote. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subsidization of internship salary – 5K students from € 50. 2. Creating 60K new jobs through the Operational Plan for the promotion and implementation of 40 investment projects. 3. Building a State Volunteering Service. 4. Fund for the financing of small and medium enterprises by young people (Equity Fund). 5. Youth cards up to 26 years of age – discount on public services. 6. Encouraging employees in the ICT sector through tax incentives. 7. Building an Oil Refinery in Prizren by promoting through the Public-Private Partnerships an investment of € 400M in its construction and opening of 1K new jobs. 8. Tripling of employees in the mining sector for four years, about 40K employees. 9. Building a "State Volunteering Service" where volunteering will be recognized as a work experience. This will be supported by a minimum salary in public services and their commitment will be known as work experience. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unemployment rate in one-digit number within 4–6 years. 2. One employee, at least for every family. 3. Special care for workers affected by privatization. 4. Development of active social policies that promote entrepreneurship and employment to reduce dependence on social schemes.
2	5	0
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The law on war veterans will be amended. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In cooperation with the associations of war categories other alternative ways will be identified, to increase the support for veterans and war invalids, along with pensions they enjoy under the legislation in force. 	

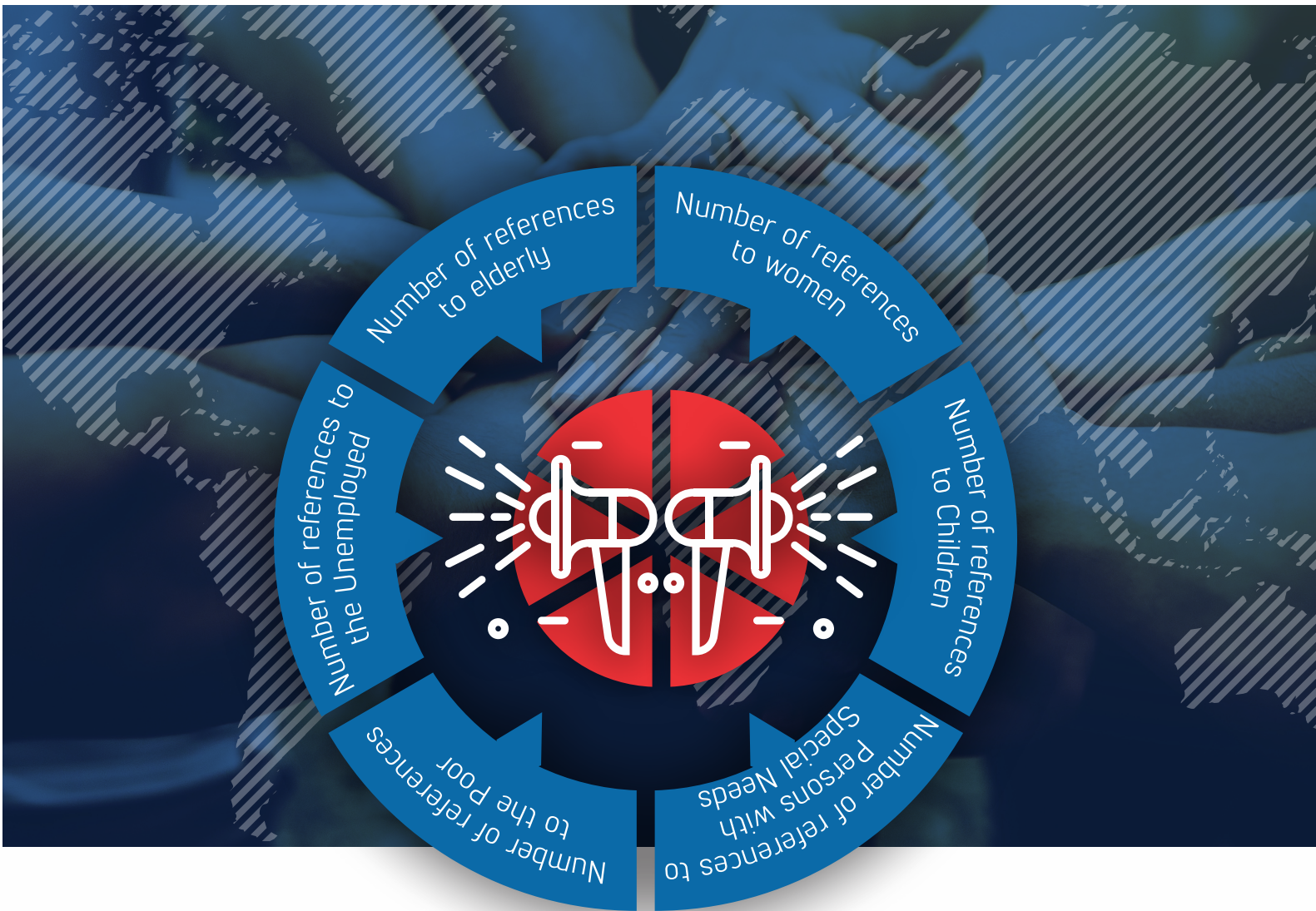
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